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CHICAGO GIANT

A Biography of "Long John" Wentworth



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John Wentworth
Chicago

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CHICAGO

GIANT

a biography
of
"Long John" Wentworth

by
Don E. Fehrenbacher

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**To My Wife, Virginia,
And To Ruth Ellen, Susan, And David**

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DON E. FEHRENBACHER

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CHICAGO GIANT

A Biography of "Long John" Wentworth

CHAPTER I

The Chicago Road

Mr. Wentworth possesses merit as a scholar and a gentleman, and has already discovered talent as a politician which gives him the first rank among our young men. He goes to the West in pursuit of fortune and fame.—*Governor Isaac Hill of New Hampshire to General Henry Dodge, Governor of Wisconsin Territory, September 29, 1836.*

CHICAGO IN 1836 offered little to please the senses of a youth freshly arrived from the scenic lake country of New Hampshire. It lay upon a low plain, windswept and marshy, near the point where two listless streams united to wander a final short mile into Lake Michigan. Some five hundred wooden buildings, thrown hastily together, sheltered nearly four thousand persons where hardly one tenth as many had lived only three years before. Here were all the crudities and confusion, the untidy litter and offensive odors, of a frontier town which was growing with uncomfortable rapidity.

To John Wentworth, however, scenery and comfort were of minor concern. Like the other young men who were hurrying westward in this climactic year of a boom-time era, he sought only a short, straight pathway to wealth and influence. It was quickly apparent that Chicago, in her very rawness and isolation, extended opportunities beyond any that he had ever imagined. In the prosperous bustle of wagons through her

muddy streets, in her swelling population and soaring land values, he read the future's promise for this natural gateway to the empty, beckoning prairies of the new Northwest. Here there was no entrenched older generation to pre-empt leadership in public affairs and private enterprise. This was a young town, where the talents of a beardless Dartmouth graduate would be appreciated, the more readily when it was noted that their possessor stood six and one-half feet tall and proclaimed himself a disciple of Andrew Jackson.

Back home, it was different. Rural New England was in the midst of that economic revolution which would eventually depopulate many of her farming communities. New Hampshire had prolific fathers and more sons than she needed, and the West attracted many whom the birthplace expelled. New Hampshire had, for that matter, more Wentworths than she needed. Their name was as familiar in the state, and as important in its history, as the name Lee in Virginia. The American progenitor of this eminent and numerous family was Elder William Wentworth, who came to America in 1636 with John Wheelright and moved subsequently to Exeter, and then to Dover. Among his descendants were the last two royal governors of New Hampshire, Benning Wentworth and his nephew John.

In the 1770's, while Governor John Wentworth labored to hold his colony loyal to the King, a distant cousin of identical name was standing forth as a leader of the revolutionary opposition. "Colonel John," as this Wentworth was usually called, to distinguish him from his Tory relative, presided in 1774 over New Hampshire's first revolutionary convention, served as chairman of her Committee of Correspondence, and was later appointed to the highest court of the state.¹ His son, "John, Jr.," represented New Hampshire in the Continental Congress and signed the Articles of Confederation. His great-grandson, also a namesake, was the young Dartmouth graduate who, in 1836, followed the course of empire to Chicago, there to be known as "Long John," and to make the name Wentworth as famous upon the prairies as it had been in upper New England.

John Wentworth, Jr.—the one who signed the Articles of Confederation—was a man of large family and poor health. He died of tuberculosis in 1787, leaving his widow with the problem of supporting seven children. Relatives came to the rescue, and the youngest, five-year-old Paul, was sent off to live with

an uncle in Maine. He later attended Exeter, where Lewis Cass was a schoolmate, but unlike his father and his sons, he received no college education.

The year 1808 found Paul Wentworth, a robust young fellow of twenty-six, working in a mercantile house at Dover Landing. By this date, the threat to national security from the Napoleonic Wars was compelling a modest expansion of the American army, and young Wentworth welcomed an opportunity to sample military life. Enlisting and becoming a captain in the newly reactivated Fourth Infantry Regiment, he spent the next few years stationed comfortably near home, until the deterioration of Indian relations on the Northwest frontier resulted in the dispatch of troops to that area. Captain Wentworth led his men to Indiana as ordered, but then resigned his commission on October 29, 1811, nine days before the battle of Tippecanoe.² Returning to New Hampshire, he bought a farm in the town of Sandwich and settled down, in the summer of 1812, to a long life as merchant, dairy farmer, politician, and community leader.

Sandwich Town is a rectangle of one hundred square miles lying just north of Lake Winnepesaukee, in a region now popular among summer vacationers. Rimmed with lakes or mountains on nearly all sides, it was nevertheless able to support a thriving farm community in the early part of the nineteenth century. Excellent pastures encouraged the raising of livestock, and residents were proud of their growing reputation for breeding fine cattle and horses.³ Paul Wentworth found at Sandwich the permanent home that he had never before known. In 1820, after having bought and sold several farms, he acquired an estate overlooking the village from a hill thereafter identified with the Wentworth name. Soon he broadened his activities to include lumbering and the operation of a general store.

A tall man, handsome and determined looking in his portrait, Wentworth attracted the confidence of his neighbors, who loaded him with public responsibilities. He was an officer in the militia, a moderator of the town meeting, selectman, justice of the peace, and legislator—sometimes holding two or three positions simultaneously. And when the Democratic party was in power, his store was likely to be the post office. "One might almost say that he ran the town of Sandwich," writes a local historian.⁴

In 1814, Paul had married Lydia Cogswell, a spirited and attractive girl in her early twenties and a distant cousin in the vast Wentworth clan. As his business interests and community influence expanded, so did his family, until five sons and four daughters had been born to the marriage. Lydia Wentworth was attended in her first pregnancy by Dr. Asa Crosby, earliest physician and leading citizen of Sandwich, who then owned the hill farm that Paul later purchased. In his account book for March 5, 1815, Dr. Crosby noted a charge of four dollars for "a visit" and "obstetrics" at the Wentworth home.⁵ Long John Wentworth's entry into the world was as inexpensive as his departure from it was to be lavish.

Of John's childhood little is known. The oldest of many children and large for his years, much was probably expected of him at an early age. There were younger brothers and sisters to supervise, cows to be milked, and the store to be tended. When still very small, he trudged up into the hills with lunches for the loggers, and by the time he was ten he was swinging an axe alongside his father's hired men.⁶

He undoubtedly knew his share of the usual boyish adventures. Squam Lake and Bear Camp River invited exploration, and the mountains were places of beauty and excitement. Fish could be caught, small game trapped, and there were special seasonal joys like sugaring-off day. Another festive occasion was the regular muster of militia on a training ground in front of the Wentworth house. Nibbling gingerbread bought from an enterprising peddler, John watched proudly each year as his father drilled the troops before the eyes of the entire village.

But such events were deviations from a normal schedule of hard work. From his father John learned industriousness and frugality, together with a love for good farm animals and a deep interest in politics. No man could have held office as often as Paul Wentworth without many conferences, much connivance, and some trampling upon toes. His son needed only an alert ear to study the art of local politics from a master. Later events testify that he learned his lessons well. From his Congregationalist parents, the boy also inherited an orthodox religious outlook and a habit of regular church attendance, while from their recital of his ancestors' achievements, he acquired a lasting pride in the family name and an interest in history that never flagged.

Paul Wentworth set high standards for the education of his

children and was not satisfied with the Sandwich public schools, where they learned to read, write, and cipher. In his twelfth year John was sent to attend a private academy at Gilmanton, on the other side of Lake Winnepesaukee. The experiment may not have been completely successful, for in the following year Paul transferred his son to Wolfborough Academy. This was nearer home, but apparently no more satisfactory. In the summer of 1828, John returned to Sandwich, determined to forget schools and become a farmer. Stubbornly, his father sent him off to try again.

Some twenty miles to the southwest, on the Pemigewasset River, was the town of New Hampton. Here, only seven years before, an academy had been opened in a plain wooden building that was fitted with unpainted benches and heated by an open fireplace. With the Baptists assuming control in 1825, a new recitation hall had been constructed, but until 1829 there was no dormitory, and students boarded in villagers' homes. For some reason, perhaps because he was now thirteen and hardened to boarding-school life, young Wentworth found New Hampton Academy congenial. He attended it regularly in the three years that followed (except for a single winter session at Meredith Academy), and his sister Lydia soon joined him there.⁷

John was one of some seventy boys registered in the academy's college preparatory program in classics. For tuition of three dollars for a twelve-week term, "to be paid punctually at its close," he was drilled in Latin and Greek grammar, Caesar, Cicero, Virgil, and the Greek Testament. With board and room available for one dollar a week, the yearly cost of this education was not oppressively high.⁸ Yet there were many boys who could not afford to enroll—or could not be spared from their farm homes—for more than the winter term. Those in attendance throughout the entire year were usually the sons of well-to-do urbanites, attracted from as far away as Boston by the growing reputation of the school. The not surprising result was a clear-cut social cleavage.

When he began his studies at New Hampton, John found the only literary society monopolized by the older and more aristocratic students, who extended memberships upon a highly exclusive basis. Whether the tall boy from Sandwich, with his distinguished name but countrified manners, was denied admission or rejected it, cannot be said. But making war upon

such snobbery was fast becoming fashionable. Andrew Jackson now sat in the White House, and Paul Wentworth's friend Isaac Hill was climaxing his long fight against the New Hampshire aristocracy with a campaign that would carry him triumphantly into the United States Senate. In a schoolboy expression of the new equalitarian spirit, a group of New Hampton students met—probably in Wentworth's room sometime during the year 1830—and laid plans for the creation of a new society called the "Social Fraternity." After serving its immediate purpose of democratizing the social life of the academy, the organization continued to flourish throughout the century. As an old man Wentworth would proudly return to observe its fiftieth anniversary.⁹

At New Hampton the month of August brought the annual "Exhibition," and Wentworth always remembered the excitement of this one great day when a brass band came to town. "There were tinware peddlers," he later recalled, "book peddlers and other peddlers, auctioneering off their goods, and you ought to see how they were deserted the moment the music was begun. . . . There were stands, also, where gingerbread, bakers' crackers, cigars, pipes, plug tobacco, lemonade, and new rum was sold." Dressed in black silk gowns, the students escorted faculty members and guests to the meetinghouse for the exercises. There John declaimed an excerpt from a Webster oration, or struggled through a Greek dialogue, or debated the relative importance of the mariner's compass and the printing press.¹⁰

In the spring of 1832 young Wentworth moved to still another academy—his fifth—in South Berwick, Maine, and there completed his preparatory education. Then, after a summer at home, he packed his trunk once more and climbed into a stage-coach, bound this time for Dartmouth College. There was no longer any reluctance about returning to school. By now he had awakened to the exciting attractions of politics, had begun to write articles for Democratic newspapers, and could see the wisdom of getting a college degree.

The Dartmouth that he entered was by this date well recovered from the devastating effects of her charter controversy, which had ended a dozen years earlier. Nathan Lord had begun his stabilizing thirty-five years as president, enrollment was curving upward toward two hundred, and several badly needed buildings had recently been completed. One of these

new brick structures was named "Wentworth Hall," in honor of New Hampshire's last royal governor. Here, appropriately, John lived during his freshman year, wrestling with algebra and plodding through his daily assignments in Adams' *Roman Antiquities* and *Collectanea Graeca Majora*.¹¹

Upon occasion, he probably wandered into the room next door for a political discussion with James Grimes. He may even have lent some neighborly assistance on translations to this future governor of Iowa, who was the weakest student in his class. Hearty and friendly in his manner, Wentworth was soon well acquainted with most of his classmates, who quickly christened him "Long John," but there is no suggestion of any close comradeships such as boys often form in college. He lived alone because he was too tall to share a bed and because it suited his temperament. His genius, as time would show, was for making enemies, not friends.

While one suspects from his later interests that he found few delights in the classics, he knew that chores must be done, and one fellow student later testified that he worked hard at his books. The grade report for his sophomore year—no other is available—shows him regular in attendance at recitations and places him scholastically about in the middle of his class, with rhetoric giving him more trouble than either mathematics or language. From Thucydides and Euclid in his second year he worked his way through trigonometry, conic sections, chemistry, and Tacitus, to senior studies of Locke, Paley, and *The Federalist*. In addition, there were always the regular exercises in declamation and English composition to keep him busy. Chapel services preceded breakfast every morning, and compulsory church attendance further checked any tendencies toward moral relaxation.¹²

Judged by the standards of the times, it was a thorough education. The cost was twenty-seven dollars a year for tuition, perhaps another sixty for board and room, together with incidental charges that brought the total to something over one hundred dollars. Moderate as it may seem today, this was a sum not easily raised in the 1830's, especially if one insisted, as Paul Wentworth did, upon a college education for all of his sons. It was therefore a common thing for college students to help pay their way by teaching in near-by public schools for several months during the winter. By scheduling a vacation

that stretched from the end of November to the beginning of March, Dartmouth tailored her program to fit the needs of these youthful schoolmasters, who sometimes constituted nearly one half of her entire student body.

John Wentworth, whose unusual height must have been in itself a strong recommendation in an era when successful pedagogy seemed to depend more upon physical impressiveness than upon erudition, had already tried his luck as a teacher during his final winter at New Hampton. There, for ten dollars a month, he had shared his sixteen-year-old's wisdom with a motley collection of public school pupils, including some, he later swore, who were old enough to vote. At Dartmouth, except during his freshman year, he was one of those who went forth each winter to villages like Grafton and East Lebanon to trade their accumulated learning and three months of their time for a salary of perhaps fifty dollars a term and the privilege of "boarding around" the town. Early in the spring they would return to take up their studies and trade accounts of their schoolhouse experiences.

The annual transition from positions of authority to college classrooms where they were again treated like boys was always a shock to the young teachers. This may partially explain the regular waves of rebelliousness that swept through the Dartmouth student body every year at about the same time. Or perhaps it was only youthful exuberance at the first signs of winter's demise that made the spring term customarily a period of student devilry and one long nightmare for the harassed faculty. Except for the literary societies, such as the United Fraternity to which Wentworth belonged, there were no institutionalized outlets for the springtime flood of pent-up emotions. But this lack only encouraged the American genius for improvisation. Teachers by day and policemen by night, the men of the faculty were kept busy levying fines and pronouncing dismissals for dancing, card playing, drunkenness, and other forbidden diversions. But they were kept still busier amplifying the existing rules to embrace ingenious new rogueries that boredom and imagination periodically combined to produce. Although Wentworth may never have released turkeys during a chapel service or placed a skunk upon an instructor's chair, defiled a classroom with assafoetida or exploded a powder-filled bottle in Dartmouth Hall, he was too much the leader

and rebel to have abstained from all such enjoyable activities. Presumably he did his part in the assaults upon college decorum.

Yet until a few weeks before he graduated, his only recorded sin had been attendance at a dancing school, for which he and some thirty other students were fined two dollars apiece. Then, on June 30, 1836, the faculty suddenly voted to dismiss "Senior Wentworth" from school. One can only imagine his consternation at this disastrous blow, and the struggle with his pride before he decided to throw himself upon the mercy of his judges. At a meeting the next day, it was "voted that execution of the sentence against Wentworth, in consequence of a confession made by him to the Faculty, be suspended during the pleasure of the Faculty." The diploma snatched from his outstretched hand was thus placed once again within reach.¹⁸

The official minutes of the faculty meetings give no hint of the offense to which he pled guilty, and Wentworth himself never referred to the episode when he reminisced about Dartmouth. Expulsion followed by forgiveness upon evidence of contrition was a standard disciplinary device. But coming as it did upon the eve of commencement, the punishment was quite severe and suggests some behavior that was thoroughly outrageous in the eyes of the faculty. One incident which occurred at about the same time may supply an explanation. A certain tutor had brought about the suspension of two students for insolent behavior. The retaliation that followed was described by one of Wentworth's classmates in a letter written two weeks later:

. . . some individuals took a large cannon from the gunhouse in this village, drew it up near the college building about under the offending tutor's window, and fired it with such a tremendous charge as to break about three hundred and twenty squares of glass from the college buildings. It jarred the houses in most distant parts of the village, was heard several miles distant and supposed to be an earthquake. The rogues soon retired but the Faculty were on the alert immediately, went to the students' rooms . . . and found the boots of one to fit some of the tracks. With this and some little other evidence they [sic] faculty expelled him. They could not detect any others. At a meeting of the students upon case of the expelled one, a classmate of [mine?] made a speech so outrageous against the

Faculty that they dismissed him for a year, but after [he] had made a *very humble* acknowledgement they received him back.¹⁴

The cannoneers themselves were specifically identified as sophomores, but the humbled young demagogue described in the final sentence was probably Long John Wentworth. Those who knew him later would have testified that he was as capable of delivering an abusive harangue as he was unlikely to be involved in the use of artillery.

A letter that he wrote after settling in Chicago shows him nursing a grudge against the Dartmouth professors.¹⁵ This lingering animosity stemmed not only from his recent humiliation at their hands, but also from disgust at their political sympathies. For Daniel Webster's alma mater was a stronghold of Whiggery, as it had been in earlier decades of Federalism, while Wentworth's ardor for Jacksonian Democracy had grown year by year. Politics was his great extracurricular interest in college. He wrote letters to editors, proselytized fellow students, followed avidly the debates in Congress, and found a new idol in Thomas Hart Benton. With his father serving in the state legislature, it was not difficult to establish personal ties with some of the leading New Hampshire Democrats, including Isaac Hill, who took a special interest in the earnest young giant.

During the winter of his senior year, while he was teaching at East Lebanon, Wentworth was chosen a delegate to the district convention at Canaan. There he experienced for the first time the drama and excitement inherent in this newfangled political institution, and his self-esteem was nourished by appointment to the chairmanship of the committee on resolutions. He went back to Dartmouth the following spring more dedicated than ever to the party cause, expressing his feelings to Hill in rambling metaphor:

With sincere thanks for the favours bestowed upon me while at Lebanon, I would request you, when at leisure, to direct to me a copy of Mr. Benton's speech upon the Expunging resolutions; hoping to amply repay you for your trouble by sowing seed in this hot bed of all the ingredients that make up the nauseous compound of modern Whiggery that shall spring up and eventually root out the thistles, which, at the last election,

we clipped even with the ground, but are already beginning to shoot up again under the influence of the dark sin of abolition.¹⁶

In the final words of this letter, Wentworth was merely parroting the orthodox Jacksonian view of antislavery agitators. They were looked upon as Whigs in disguise who hoped to disrupt the Democratic party and divert public attention from the more important issues of the day. With the group of young radicals from Phillips Academy who entered Dartmouth in 1835 and launched an abolitionist movement upon the campus, he had no sympathy whatsoever. Many years were to pass before he would receive the praise of William Lloyd Garrison.

New Hampshire politics became especially exciting in May of 1836, when Hill resigned from the United States Senate to become governor. The man favored to replace him was young Franklin Pierce, but a feud between these two party leaders was already beginning to take shape, and the gossip spread that Hill was maneuvering to thwart the other's ambitions. With youthful presumptuousness Wentworth intervened in the controversy and tried to smooth it over by denying the rumor in a letter to one of Pierce's advisers.¹⁷

Many of the outstanding politicians of the state were on hand as usual for the Dartmouth commencement in 1836, when John Wentworth delivered his senior oration upon "National Prosperity as Connected with the Advancement of Science." But this was in no sense a special honor. Before the sun had sunk behind the Vermont hills, all forty-seven members of his class had demonstrated their declamatory talents to the patient audience. At some time during the lengthy proceedings Pierce told Wentworth that he hoped to have his father's support for the Senate. Although such confidences were flattering to a youngster just come of age, John was discouraged at the number of men little older than himself who, like Pierce, held the inside track to preferment in the Democratic party of New Hampshire. In later years he offered this as his main reason for leaving his native state.

After graduation, he returned to Sandwich. There, during August and September, he watched the development of the presidential campaign and threshed out the plans for his own future in long talks with his parents. Obviously, for a young man attracted to politics, the next step ought to be the study

of law, and an able tutor could easily be found among his father's friends in Concord. But did he want to stay in New Hampshire, where the wells of opportunity seemed insufficient to slake the thirst of the younger generation? His father, an industrious and highly successful man by Sandwich standards, was accumulating a modest fortune, but slowly and painfully. Why climb hand over hand when the newer America offered broad ladders to wealth and recognition? Some of his acquaintances had already headed West and were sending back glowing reports. Why not follow them and study law in Detroit, or Chicago, or St. Louis?

His father's views are not recorded, nor is the date that John himself came to a decision. But there had been some careful preparation made before he departed on October 3, 1836, for he carried letters of introduction from Governor Isaac Hill and other New Hampshire dignitaries to such Western leaders as the governors of Illinois and Wisconsin. "Brother John left us on the 3rd," his sister Lydia noted in her diary. "He is now far from us but the eye of the Omnipotent Jehovah is upon him. The seperation [sic] was indeed a painful one. . . . I found a partial relief in tears at the hour of his departure. . . . May his life and health be precious in thy sight, O God, and succeed him in all his laudable exertions as far as may be for his temporal and spiritual welfare. Yet I would not ask thee to set him on the high places of earth, but O, number him with thy saints in glory everlasting."¹⁸

With this affectionate benediction following him, John Wentworth began the journey which would carry him to wealth, power, and considerable fame. But no one after Lydia ever suggested him for sainthood.

The way westward from Sandwich was complicated and tedious. He caught the post coach which rumbled south to Concord, and then proceeded by stage across New England and through Troy to Schenectady. There he climbed aboard the first railroad train he had ever seen and rode to Utica. Next an Erie Canal boat carried him on to Tonawanda at the western end of New York. After a Sunday visit to Niagara Falls, he boarded a lake steamer at Buffalo and reached Detroit on October 13.

It was now ten days since he had left home. His funds had dwindled considerably, and he was weary of travel. Perhaps this was his city of promise. He talked it over with the brilliant

young lawyer and future railroad baron, James Frederick Joy, whom he had known at Dartmouth. Joy, an enthusiastic booster in spite of his recent arrival, urged him to consider the opportunities in Detroit before moving on. So he advertised for a teaching position, and even set out upon a walking tour to Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor, but nowhere did he find employment to suit his talents and ambitions. Finally he turned his blistered feet back toward Detroit, determined to continue on to Chicago. Placing his trunk on a westbound brig for shipment and himself upon the narrow, open mudcart that doubled for a stagecoach, he resumed his westward trek on Thursday, the twentieth of October.¹⁹

Departure was at noon, and something halfway between rain and snow was falling upon the unsheltered heads of the eight passengers. With the wheels of their vehicle biting deep into the softened earth, they crept but a painful dozen miles before nightfall. "Never in all my life before did I see such roads," John wrote to Lydia.²⁰ After a few hours sleep, they set out again at three o'clock in the morning, but the mud of the "Chicago Road" clung tenaciously to the wheels, as though Michigan were unwilling to release them to her western rivals. Then the carriage broke down completely and the passengers struggled a dozen miles on foot before the driver caught up with them. They clambered in once more and rode this time without sleep from Friday afternoon until Monday night, covering the two hundred miles to Michigan City, Indiana. Occasionally, for short distances, the miserable passengers were extended the luxury of a regular stagecoach, but to Wentworth this meant only that the fear of tumbling sleepily from the cart was replaced by the annoyance of a steady, thumping contact between his head and the top of the coach. In neither type of vehicle could he sleep.

At Michigan City he faced a serious dilemma. Every inch of his weary frame demanded an overnight break in the journey, but the stage was going straight on to Chicago, and if he gave up his seat, he would have great difficulty getting another. He must either ride sixty more miles immediately, or walk the same distance after a good night's rest. With two companions, he chose the latter alternative, and fell into bed. "Never before," he wrote, "did I realize the advantages of sleep. In the morning we arose with spirits as buoyant as ever. . . . We found a wagon and three men going to Chicago, and we put our bag-

gage aboard and kept up with them on foot." At the end of the day, and twenty miles closer to their goal, they found supper and lodging for fifty cents in a shacklike inn on the edge of Lake Michigan. A single room, which served also as bar and kitchen, was equipped with bunks arranged in three tiers around the walls. In these quarters twenty-three men slept that night and the next morning were hustled out-of-doors so that there would be room to cook breakfast.

Not waiting to eat, Wentworth and his two companions plunged off at an early hour upon the next leg of their journey. As they made their way around the southernmost edge of the lake, they came upon a schooner battered against the shore. Staring at the wreck, John congratulated himself upon having chosen the overland route from Detroit. He did not know it, but like the young Lincoln viewing the slave trade of New Orleans, he was gazing upon a problem with which his future was to be intimately tied. Within a decade he would be delivering impassioned appeals upon the floor of Congress for navigational aids on the Great Lakes, perhaps remembering as he did so the tragic sight which had met his eyes at his first approach to Chicago.

The second day of trudging brought him to the town of Calumet on the Illinois line. Sore of foot after covering almost thirty miles, he was offered nothing better than sleeping space upon the floor of the local hotel. All the empty beds were reserved for a party of young bucks who had come out from Chicago to roast game, drink wine, and sing songs. The New Hampshire boy listened to their revelry and suffered his worst attack of homesickness. Disillusion swept over him, and he wondered whether the westward movement was worth its costs. "Could I but rehearse to some of the people," he later wrote, "the sufferings, trials and misfortunes that I have witnessed a hundred times over in emigrants, they would remain at home and be willing to dig hard for even a competency."

Confidence returned with the next morning's sun, and his long, eager steps quickly ate up the remaining miles to Chicago. New arrivals were now commonplace in the mushrooming community, but here was a figure—150 pounds stretched to a height of six feet, six inches—that spun heads around for a second look as it passed. Bulldog-square jaw thrust aggressively forward, carpetbag swinging briskly in his hand, Long John strode into town at about noon on Thursday, October 27, an

historic and fortunate hour, he always felt, for both himself and the city.²¹

As he made his way along one of the unkempt streets, he came suddenly upon Matthew Moloney, a friend from New Hampton days. His pleasure at seeing a familiar face was multiplied when Moloney solved the serious problem of lodging by offering to share his room at the United States Hotel. This was Proprietor John Murphy's new name for the famous old Sauganash House, a combination log and frame building which fiddling Mark Beaubien had erected a few years before near the forks of the Chicago River. Wentworth accepted the invitation gratefully and was soon a fixture at Mrs. Murphy's celebrated dinner table.²²

He had found himself a home none too soon, for this was the height of the "sickly" season in Illinois, and the long journey from Sandwich had sapped his strength. Before a week had passed an attack of erysipelas confined him to his bed with a badly inflamed leg. The doctor prescribed antimony and a dose of salts. In three days the siege was over, and he felt "better than ever."²³

Now he could return to his interrupted investigation of Chicago's opportunities; an activity in which he was not alone. Scores of young men, more or less established, walked the streets with their eyes peeled for the main chance. Walter Newberry and Gurdon Hubbard were there; so was William B. Ogden, pursuing his various enterprises with the dexterity of a juggler. Sharp-tongued Ebenezer Peck, a bitter enemy in years to come, was already a dominant figure in the Jacksonian Democracy. Future mayors like Francis C. Sherman and Thomas Dyer, future editors like Charles Wilson and Zebina Eastman, were on the scene. And among the most recent arrivals were Isaac N. Arnold, dignified even in youth, and Norman B. Judd who had just entered into a law partnership with John Dean Caton. These and many others Wentworth would soon come to know; these were the men with whom he worked and quarreled during the next fifty years of the city's mighty growth.²⁴

Most of them were from New England and New York. Few were much beyond thirty years of age. In letters home the youth from Sandwich described with priggish disapproval their tendencies toward dissipation, but he wrote admiringly of their

shrewdness and energy. They had come in on the ground floor, and Chicago's future was theirs. Peering through the windows of their offices and stores, they could see the population—and their prospects—multiplying by the hour. As the November winds swept in across the mud flats, newcomers continued to pour into town, overflowing the inadequate rooming houses and hotels.

A crisis at Wentworth's own quarters pointed up the desperate struggle for shelter. John Murphy was merely the renter of his place of business. The owner, who had other plans, ordered him out and began to tear down the building. When the alarm sounded through the town, many of the 150 residents of the United States Hotel rushed to Murphy's assistance. In a pitched battle that resulted in at least one broken arm, they drove the invading workmen from the premises, and then celebrated their victory with a lavish champagne dinner. The removal was postponed until spring, when Wentworth and many others followed their doughty proprietor to a new building on the west side of the river.²⁵

A second problem was solved as easily as that of lodging when an attorney named Henry Moore agreed to let Wentworth study law in his office. But the third offered more difficulty. He must still earn his living, preferably in a manner that was suitable for a college graduate but that did not require a capital investment. Nothing developed in the first weeks, and when he wrote to Lydia on November 10, he was not yet sure that he would remain in Chicago. By that time, however, certain intricate negotiations were under way which would suddenly elevate him to a position of prestige and influence in the bustling lakeside town.

CHAPTER II

The Young Editor

Let me have a chance to go my length and I go beyond any man. All vanity is excusable in editors.—*John Wentworth to Horatio Hill, February 16, 1837.*

THE ISOLATION OF the American frontier was not one of its recommendations for most Western settlers. Seldom were they so occupied with immediate material tasks that they did not hunger for news from the world beyond their crude villages and lonely farms. The infant community around Fort Dearborn rejoiced in 1833, when a New Yorker named John Calhoun landed his printing equipment from a lake schooner and established the *Chicago Democrat*. The pioneer journalist had the field to himself for two difficult but modestly successful years, until Thomas O. Davis began to publish a Whig newspaper, the *Chicago American*. In spite of this new competition, the swelling population and feverish prosperity seemed to indicate that Calhoun's leanest years were already behind him, but by 1836 he was in failing health and anxious to sell out.

The local Democratic leaders, wishing to bolster their strength in this critical election year, tried hard to find a new proprietor. But no one, the *American* sneered, was "courageous enough to risk his reputation in a sinking cause."¹ In the autumn of 1836 Calhoun became so ill that his editorial duties

were taken over temporarily by Daniel Brainard, an impeccable but versatile young physician. The political hazards of such hand-to-mouth journalism seemed amply demonstrated in the November election, when Van Buren swept the state and the country, but lost Chicago to Harrison by a handful of votes.

Then, on November 14, a satisfactory solution was found. Calhoun signed an agreement selling the *Democrat*, for \$2,300, to Horatio Hill, brother of the Jacksonian governor of New Hampshire who had befriended Wentworth.² Raising the money would require an immediate trip East for Hill, and this posed the problem of finding a devoted Democrat to act as deputy editor until his return. It is not surprising that in such circumstances he should turn to his brother's young protégé who had just arrived in town. The issue of November 23 carried John Wentworth's name as "agent for the proprietor," and marked the beginning of a twenty-five-year career in Chicago journalism.

Wentworth accepted Hill's offer without hesitation. Party leaders might doubt the wisdom of placing such responsibility in the hands of a callow newcomer, but they were pleased at the way he rolled up his sleeves and went to work at the double task of learning his job and rescuing a dying business. Although the *American* might ridicule the "Bread and Butterish Gawky" from New Hampshire who did not know "a sheep's foot from a mallet" about the newspaper profession, its Whiggish editor soon realized that his new rival combined an infectious enthusiasm with a dangerous Yankee cunning in financial transactions.³

It was to the financial aspect of the paper that Wentworth gave most of his attention in the first months. The subscription list, which he found "in a most miserable condition," was overhauled and enlarged by assiduous salesmanship. Seven weeks after becoming editor, he could claim 131 new subscribers with only a few cancellations. Nor did he neglect any possible source of additional income. A mixture of open friendliness and subtle threats persuaded the Chicago postmaster to award him the job of printing the regular lists of letters received. He also won the contract to publish the tax lists, which paid \$150, and he boasted to Hill of having netted a profit of thirty-three dollars on the printing of the proposed city charter.⁴

Such energy could not fail to spill over into the columns of the paper itself. Nailing to his masthead the motto "Principles,

Not Men," Wentworth dashed off vigorous editorials in which he compounded a note of high Jacksonian idealism with a calculated appeal to Western material desires. As the weeks passed, more and more people at increasingly greater distances became aware that the anemic *Democrat* had suddenly become red blooded and virile. Governor John Reynolds wrote a letter of praise, and other flatterers told the young editor that he was already publishing the best newspaper in the state. These commendations only stimulated his expansive ambition. He would not be satisfied, he declared, until the *Democrat* was the best in the West and had four thousand subscribers, a goal which he expected to reach within two years. "To think," he marveled, "that a young man unacquainted with all kinds of business, and having written but little, should now do so much and acquit himself so successfully . . . as guardian of the rights, privileges, and franchises of men, is indeed wonderful."⁵

Although pleased with himself, Wentworth was less sanguine about the fortunes of his party in Chicago. There were at least a dozen factions striving for the upper hand, he informed Hill, and they all came to him with their complaints, aspirations, and advice. He was determined to keep the *Democrat* clear of intraparty quarrels by being "friendly to all but intimate with none." Nevertheless, he found it difficult to establish a reputation for impartiality because of the domination which had been exercised over John Calhoun by contentious Ebenezer Peck. Long John dared not falter in his public support of so powerful a figure, but he privately confessed that Peck's character was said to be "black as hell," and he quietly spread the word that the *Democrat* was no longer under his influence. Peck was unaware of these maneuvers for some time, and, in January of 1837, he wrote to Hill praising Wentworth's debut as an editor. He was but the first among many who, to their sorrow, underestimated the talents and guile of the young man from New Hampshire.⁶

Whether Wentworth did or did not intend to continue with the *Democrat* as a subordinate after Hill had returned to assume control, cannot be stated with certainty. "I like the editorial business very well and think I might make a decent one," he wrote. But then he added: "At least when I have nothing else to do, grow older and get better acquainted with Illinois laws."⁷ Hill, in the meantime, was meeting serious trouble in the East, where money was tight by the spring of 1837 because

of the developing financial panic. Gradually it became apparent that he would not be able to complete his purchase of the newspaper, and Chicago Democrats found themselves again seeking a proprietor, but under far less favorable conditions than had existed the previous autumn. The one bright spot was Wentworth's demonstrated ability to manage the paper at a profit.

The details at this point are obscure, but Peck, who was under much pressure because he had guaranteed Hill's payment to Calhoun, apparently persuaded a number of Democratic leaders to support the paper financially until Wentworth could buy them out. Long John jumped at the chance to become editor and proprietor in his own right, and the arrangements were completed in July of 1837.⁸

A less auspicious time for setting up in business could not have been chosen. The black grip of depression had been slow to fasten itself upon Chicago, but by midsummer the paper wealth of the city, built upon speculation in town lots, was beginning to melt away. Currency was almost impossible to obtain, and the debtor's anguished plea for "stay laws" was replacing the swaggering optimism of the year before. And yet it was during the long procession of dark days which followed, when the richest men sometimes became the poorest men, when the population of Chicago almost ceased to grow, and when a frightened people sought comfort in the city's first great revival movement, that John Wentworth made a financial success of managing the *Chicago Democrat*. According to his own subsequent testimony, he had paid off \$2,800 of indebtedness and owned the paper outright by 1840.⁹

Any records which would reveal how he accomplished such a feat have long since disappeared. There is no evidence of help from his father, but the Yankee storekeeper *had* taught his son how to pinch a penny, and Wentworth always maintained that he had completed his purchase of the newspaper by no other means than a rigid adherence to the rule of spending less each week than he took in. Yet with money so scarce, it is hard to believe that he was able to repay his sponsors in cash, for much of the business of the *Democrat* was necessarily conducted on a credit basis. Many a hard-pressed subscriber had to be carried on the account books, and for job work and advertising Wentworth was often forced to accept personal notes or nothing at all. He in turn may have persuaded his

silent partners to take some of these notes instead of currency when he bought them out. And if he did occasionally have specie to offer them, they were probably willing to scale down their claims in order to get it.

Driven by an impatient ambition, brimming with the health and vigor of youth, Wentworth achieved success in an atmosphere of gloomy failure by doing the work of several men. He managed the finances of the *Democrat*, wrote most of its copy, solicited subscriptions and advertising, assisted in the printing, and sometimes even acted as delivery boy. It was a man-killing pace, and it seriously curtailed his political activities and legal studies. He began very early to seek a dependable lieutenant who could assume responsibility for the mechanical and business side of the newspaper. He soon found his man in David M. Bradley of Concord, New Hampshire, a trained printer who was less given to wanderlust and alcoholism than the general run of men in his profession. Until his premature death in 1857, Bradley was Wentworth's other self on the *Democrat*, serving not only as business manager and head printer, with the power to hire and discharge, but also editing the paper in the absence of his chief, and even substituting for him at local political meetings.¹⁰

As an employer Wentworth apparently inspired mixed feelings. According to one man who worked for him, he "was close and required obedience to rules and was not popular among printers in those days." The journeymen, who earned from five to ten dollars a week at piecework rates, resented in particular his practice of hiring boys to do part of their work. Upon one occasion a large group of Chicago printers was reported to have celebrated his departure for Washington with a serenade of hoots and gibes, beating of kettles, and blowing of horns, in order to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with his labor policies. But other newspapers were equally guilty of depressing wages, and Wentworth did please his workers by paying them in hard cash whenever possible. In answer to his critics, he insisted again and again that he offered better wages and hired more journeymen than his rivals. Whatever his shortcomings, he was able to say with pride toward the end of his newspaper career: "There is no person in the city that has kept his employees as long as we have."¹¹

Other problems besides personnel confronted the New Hampshire youth from the moment he stretched his long legs

under the editorial desk. The building on South Water Street was no longer adequate, and one of his first tasks was to supervise the transfer of equipment to a new office around the corner on Clark Street. Three years later he moved again, this time to the third floor of a brick structure at 107 Lake. But always, in those early days, Long John dreamed of having his own office building as a permanent home for the *Democrat*, and nothing really satisfied him until "Jackson Hall" was completed in 1847.¹²

Supplies and equipment were also a constant worry. Shipments of paper arrived irregularly, especially during the winter months, and the *Democrat* was forced to follow the practice of other journals of suspending publication from time to time because of shortages. On at least one occasion a boy had to be dispatched on horseback to Michigan City for a bucket of ink before the next edition could be printed. Furthermore, this was an era of industrial revolution in journalism, and no Western editor could maintain his leadership unless he kept in step with the technological improvements developing in the East. Without regular changes of type, the newspaper would grow shabby in appearance, and without acquisition of new power presses, expansion of output would be impossible. In these early, depression-ridden years as editor, frugality demanded that Wentworth squeeze every last creaking bit of service out of the equipment turned over to him by Calhoun. But when good times returned in the 1840's, he could begin to modernize the *Democrat*, crowning his efforts in 1845 by purchasing the first Adams power press to cross Lake Michigan.¹³

The business of journalism, when Wentworth entered it, was a bitter struggle for existence with few survivors. The natural beneficiaries of increased literacy and broadening interest in politics, newspapers were established in amazing numbers during the 1830's and 1840's. As institutions, they were closely affiliated with political parties, and two or more journals were often published in a community where no more than one could be adequately supported. With the field overcrowded, competition fierce, and income undependable, the mortality rate for papers was high, and there was a rapid turnover in editors and proprietors. "A man who retires from the printing business without losing from one to ten thousand dollars, is a rarity," one Chicago editor declared. "A man who has relin-

quished it, after having made money at the business, is a national curiosity.”¹⁴

Two other weeklies were offered to Chicago readers at the time Wentworth took over the *Democrat*. The *Commercial Advertiser*, a frail antislavery sheet, quickly succumbed to the panic, but the *American* was made of sterner stuff. Disciples of Henry Clay were numerous in Chicago, and this official Whig organ found strong support as it savagely contested the ground with the *Democrat* for subscriptions, advertising, and job work. In 1839 a new editor named William Stuart thwarted one of Wentworth's most cherished ambitions when he began to publish the first daily newspaper in Illinois. Desperately, Long John responded a year later with a five-columned *Morning Democrat*, which taxed his mechanical facilities to the breaking point and still compared unfavorably with its larger rival. It was an unwise and short-lived venture. By 1841, Wentworth was forced to suspend its publication, leaving the daily field for the next four years to the *American*, and its successors, the *Chicago Express* and the *Chicago Daily Journal*.¹⁵

The *Weekly Democrat*, on the other hand, continued to flourish, especially among the devoted Jacksonians in the rural areas near Chicago. No dependable statistics exist for the period, but it may be safely said that Wentworth found a circulation of only a few hundred in 1836, and raised it to several thousand by the 1840's, when he claimed that it was the largest west of Buffalo.¹⁶ All subscriptions were not translated into income, however, and in hard times it was no easy task to collect for papers already delivered. Long John once dunned a member of the Illinois Supreme Court for more than fourteen years of unpaid-for issues of the *Democrat*.¹⁷ Repeatedly, he urged his fellow editors to unite upon a policy of requiring payment in advance, a step not generally taken in Illinois until the eve of the Civil War.

As an editor, no man better fitted his times than John Wentworth. He typified to the verge of caricature that boisterous and colorful age when newspapers were but extensions of the partisan prejudices and personal eccentricities of their respective editors; when moderation was a sign of effeminate weakness and objective reporting was viewed with contempt; when invective and downright scurrility were the order of the day. Wentworth was never one of those men scorned for publishing a “milk-and-water” paper. He could, if he desired, gild his

sentences in the best nineteenth-century manner, but his style was ordinarily terse and direct, with the sting of a whip. Readers opened each issue of the *Democrat* expecting to find some new quarrel begun, some reputation traduced, and they were seldom disappointed. A certain measure of ill will was the lot of most editors in those rough-and-tumble days, but the gangling youth from New Hampshire demonstrated such a mastery of vituperation and ridicule that he was soon one of the most feared and hated men in the region. "We seldom come across a more soulless and heartless piece of political dishonesty than he who edits the *Chicago Democrat*," an Indiana paper asserted during the Christmas season of 1839. "Possessing no known or settled fixed principle save that of detraction and abuse, he is equally shunned and despised by the good of all parties."¹⁸

The victims of editorial denunciation did not usually suffer in silence. Editors were beaten, shot, and occasionally taken to court for their character assassination. Working at his desk one day in 1839, Long John looked up to find an army officer brandishing two pistols over him, and thought his hour of retribution had arrived. But Captain David Hunter, angered at some squib in the *Democrat*, wanted to spill the editor's blood according to the code of honor. John eyed the weapons with great distaste and respectfully declined the challenge, offering instead to publish a statement of retraction. Hunter accepted, and later confessed that his guns had not been loaded. The story of this abortive duel was properly embroidered in the telling and retelling by Wentworth's enemies, who never tired of reminding him that he had been the "laughable dupe of full fears and empty pistols."¹⁹ Long John answered their gibes during a public address in 1841. "I am ready to meet any man with my pen or before a jury of my country but under no other circumstances," said he. Otherwise, he added, "culprits of every grade will be challenging editors and posting them as cowards if they will not fight."²⁰

Contentiousness and intemperate language alone would not have made the *Democrat* a power in Illinois politics if Wentworth had not set out from the beginning to establish it as the outstanding voice of Western Jacksonianism. No sooner had he become editor than he fired the opening guns of a twenty-five-year campaign for internal improvements at federal expense, reserving always a special enthusiasm for the Illinois and

Michigan Canal, around which the brightest hopes of Chicago were entwined. Nor did the *Democrat* fail to state in clear and urgent words the case for Benton's graduation bill and other schemes to lower the price of public lands for the benefit of Western settlers.²¹

But banking and currency received fuller treatment in the paper than any other single problem. Of all the issues that divided men and parties in the 1830's, this one caused the greatest excitement and most acrimonious argument. Jackson's destruction of the second Bank of the United States had both pleased Democrats and divided them. A conservative wing of the party was opposed not to banking itself, but only to Whig domination of the enterprise, and particularly to the kind of national monopoly that Nicholas Biddle's institution had enjoyed. These Democrats interpreted Old Hickory's policy as an endorsement of state banking, and in the Illinois legislature they joined with the Whigs to establish a state bank with all the customary powers, including the issuance of bank notes.²²

The radical "Locofoco" Democrats watched such developments without enthusiasm. To them, the entire banking system—national, state, and private—was a "vicious and rotten" product of special privilege which ought to be greatly circumscribed, if not completely exterminated. At the very least, they demanded a specie currency and divorce of the federal government from all direct association with banking institutions. Wentworth wholeheartedly embraced these extreme doctrines and became their most outspoken champion in Illinois. Implacably opposed to paper-money inflation, he welcomed the Independent Treasury, created by Congress in 1840, as an improvement both upon Biddle's "octopus" and upon Jackson's makeshift policy of depositing government funds with certain state banks.²³

Upon the State Bank of Illinois the *Democrat* waged fierce and unrelenting war, censuring its slowness in resuming specie payments after the panic and charging it with the improper use of deposits for speculation in Chicago pork and Galena lead.²⁴ The bank had been yoked by a reckless legislature to the extravagant and foredoomed internal improvement program of 1837, which pushed the state to the edge of bankruptcy, and after a few years of desperate struggle, it was forced to begin liquidation in 1843. Long John danced a jubilant hornpipe over its grave, but the victory was an empty one for hard-money

advocates. The wildcat era had already begun. Unchartered private companies were springing up to supply paper currency, and Illinois was flooded with bank notes of all sizes and colors from other states. One head of the banking monster had been sliced away, but dozens were sprouting in its place.

In his calmer moments Wentworth was inclined to admit that some banking was necessary. At those times he demanded regulation, rather than destruction, and condemned only small denominations of paper money. But he was judged by his more violent and sweeping editorials, and many Democrats joined the Whigs in denouncing him as an extremist. To their charges of radicalism he pled guilty, and then declaimed, "It was this radicalism that first drove our ancestors across the ocean. . . . Radicalism threw the tea overboard in Charlestown harbor and drove the British at Bunker Hill. . . . Our government is, in every sense of the word, a radical government and our people a radical people."²⁵

In the attempt to establish his own doctrines as official party dogma, Wentworth antagonized many local and state Democratic leaders, who found him increasingly dictatorial and arrogant. Gradually he revealed himself as a marplot by nature, but his disruptive tendencies were somewhat curbed by desire for public office and dedication to the principle of party regularity. Like many other journalists of the time, he valued his newspaper less as a means of earning a livelihood than as an instrument of power. Ever in his mind was the example of Isaac Hill, who had made the Concord *Patriot* a steppingstone to political eminence. One can see in the columns of the *Democrat* a consistent pattern of self-promotion from his earliest days as editor: Long John has just returned from a trip. Long John is attending a wedding in the country. Long John's editorial on this or that subject has been praised by Eastern newspapers. Long John is conferring with a prominent politician. Long John, ladies, is still a bachelor. "Nearly one half of your paper is occupied with your own movings and doings," one critic sneered.²⁶

Late in the year 1839, Governor Thomas Carlin appointed him aide-de-camp, with the rank of colonel, in the Illinois militia—an honorary position which obviously exposed him to ridicule. But Wentworth forestalled his enemies by making fun of himself. A cartoon in the *Democrat* presented him in an outlandish uniform, with over-sized epaulets and a plumed helmet,

mounted upon a miserable, swaybacked nag, his saber raised, his scabbard and long legs dragging in the dust, and a pack of dogs barking at his heels. Protected by this clever backfire of derision, Long John then proceeded to wear his new title in all seriousness. "The new Colonel," a Whig newspaper commented, "bears his honors meekly,—not having referred to this appointment more than forty times in a single number of his paper."²⁷

For all the irritation and contempt that his bumptiousness evoked, the young editor went right on thrusting his name before the public. Nor did he hesitate to display his person. He made countless expeditions through the rural environs of Chicago, shaking hands, swapping stories, and listening to the problems of the pioneer farmers. His aim was to ingratiate himself, and he drank their liquor, danced with their daughters, and quoted Scripture to their wives—all with the same determined enthusiasm. Everybody, before long, seemed familiar with the towering figure and bold voice of Long John Wentworth.

In his first years as editor, the way upward in politics was necessarily barred by his extreme youth, and Wentworth had to content himself with serving in the party ranks and helping other men to win elections. He watched the presidential contest of 1836 from the sidelines, having arrived from New Hampshire only a few days before, but by the following spring he was up to his ears in political activity. Chicago had been granted a city charter and was preparing feverishly for the election of its first mayor and council. Democratic meetings in each of the wards nominated William B. Ogden and a slate of candidates, while the Whigs gave their support to an "anti-caucus" ticket headed by John Kinzie.

The Democrats naturally tried to capitalize upon the popularity of Andrew Jackson, who had just made his triumphant exit from the White House, and their opponents quite as naturally condemned this injection of national politics into a local election. The *Chicago American* charged that partisan passions had been aroused by "a few ambitious demagogues—men of recent date," among whom it specified the editor of the *Democrat*. But Wentworth blithely continued his aggressive crusade for Ogden, and when the second day of May arrived, he bustled officiously about the city, distributing ballots and shepherding Democrats to the polling places. The *American* hinted

sarcastically that his flock had included a large number of illegal voters, and urged the Democratic party to pension him for his "unparalleled exertions." Ogden, who was elected easily, did not wholly ignore the suggestion. He and the new council appointed Long John to the post of official printer for the city.²⁸

Even buried under the memory of many later contests, the details of that 1837 election always remained clear in Wentworth's mind. He had been given, for the first time, responsibility proportionate to his ambition, and with it, an intoxicating taste of personal power. In campaigns that were to follow, Democrats would rely heavily upon the influence of his facile pen. One August day in 1838, a short, vigorous young man entered the offices of the *Democrat* to order some handbills advertising a speech that he was about to deliver in Chicago. Stephen A. Douglas was stumping for Congress with Wentworth's ardent support, and tradition says that upon this occasion he shed his coat to ink the type, while Long John ran the press. Douglas lost the election by a narrow margin, but his two-to-one majority in Cook County was attributable in part to Wentworth's growing influence.²⁹

As the year 1840 approached, Martin Van Buren's chances for re-election to the presidency looked increasingly forlorn in the gloom of hard times, but the *Democrat* stubbornly devoted much of its energy to the uphill battle. Firing his heaviest salvos at the expected opponent, Henry Clay, Wentworth was as surprised and flustered as most other Democrats when the Kentuckian was passed over in favor of William Henry Harrison. The hungry Whigs, sniffing the strong scent of democracy in the air, were preparing to outdo the Jacksonians in demagogic courtship of the common man. Contrasting their "sturdy old yeoman of North Bend" with the "whiskered dandy of Kinderhook," they launched the nation upon one of its most colorful and tempestuous campaigns. For almost an entire year the two parties whooped it up with spirited songs and slogans, blaring bands, marching feet, and thunderous oratory.³⁰

The *Democrat* struggled anxiously to stem the tide running against its favorite, scoffing at the ballyhoo tactics and the "old, weak, infirm and bed ridden" nominee of the enemy. But Whiggish magic had converted two Virginia-born aristocrats into personifications of log-cabin and hard-cider democracy, and the enthusiasm for Tippecanoe and Tyler seemed irresistible. The plain-folks appeal was such an obvious success that

Wentworth brazenly appropriated it during the spring mayoral election, pointing to the fact that the Whig incumbent, Benjamin Raymond, was a wealthy merchant, whereas his Democratic challenger, Alexander Loyd, was a builder and contractor who worked among the people. "While Mr. Raymond will be found perfumed in a lady's parlor," said Long John in one speech, "our candidate can be seen with his coat off shingling back houses."³¹

When the tabulation of ballots showed Loyd to be the winner, Democrats hailed the victory as a portent of success in November. But the Whigs belittled it as the product of fraudulent voting, and turned back to their assaults upon Van Buren.³² Months before election day the campaign had become so feverish and tempers so frayed that many personal friendships were endangered, and politics intruded into all aspects of life.

Chicago was even unable to witness its first hanging without a partisan furor. When a miserable fellow named John Stone was brought to trial for murder early in May, he was defended by a leading Whig lawyer before a bad-tempered Democratic judge, whom Illinois Whigs had recently tried to impeach, and a jury that included John Wentworth. The inevitable result was political sand in the machinery of justice. Before Stone was finally convicted and executed, Wentworth had been accused of improper behavior during the deliberations of the jury, the editor of the *Chicago American* had been fined for insulting Judge John Pearson in its columns, and the *Democrat* had denounced the defense attorneys as moral accessories to murder.³³

Meanwhile, in the race for state offices which accompanied the interminable presidential campaign, the Democrats of the Chicago area suddenly found themselves dangerously divided. Work upon the canal was bogging down, and only action by the legislature could prevent a complete abandonment of this vital project. But Ebenezer Peck, nominated for the lower house in a riotous convention contest with William B. Ogden, was considered lukewarm toward the canal by many members of his own party. Ogden, who was a canal contractor, and who felt that he had been swindled out of the nomination, was persuaded to enter the race as an independent. The two men exchanged vituperative letters in the newspapers, and Whigs of the district lost no time in exploiting the rupture by throwing their assistance to Ogden and the rebellious "Canal ticket."³⁴

For Wentworth, the situation was embarrassing. However much he might sympathize privately with Ogden, he was bound by the principle of party regularity to support his opponent. This he did, but halfheartedly, and when Peck eventually won the election, the *Democrat* was noticeably restrained in its congratulations.³⁵

Wentworth spared no efforts in his fight to carry the region for Van Buren. Early in the spring, he had begun to issue a semimonthly campaign paper, *The Ball in Motion*, and throughout the year he maintained a strenuous schedule of stump speeches. To promote circulation of the *Democrat* he had always cultivated the acquaintance of postmasters, and the Whigs now charged that he was touring the northern part of the state at government expense for the purpose of bludgeoning federal employees into support of the president. When the *Democrat* began to publish lists of the postmasters with their political inclinations, the *American* was confirmed in its suspicion that Long John had been appointed an official hatchet man for the administration.³⁶

Election time in Chicago was the natural culmination of the turbulent campaign. Partisan animosities boiled over into a series of street brawls and other disorders that landed some enthusiasts in jail. At one point a mob of Democrats, led by a justice of the state Supreme Court, tried to force the release of some comrades who had been locked up by the sheriff. The Whigs, too, had their troubles, and Wentworth was no doubt amused at the arrest of Captain Hunter—the would-be duelist—for knocking a man down.³⁷

When the smoke of battle lifted, Democrats could rejoice at the news that Chicago and Illinois had voted for Van Buren, but their faces lengthened as the returns poured in from other states. The nation as a whole preferred Harrison, and for the first time since his academy days, Wentworth's party was out of power.

And yet, during this year of Democratic disaster, a routine procedure was preparing Long John's future. Almost unnoticed in the fury of the presidential campaign, the sixth census of the United States was being taken. When the data had been assembled, and Congress had passed the necessary act of reapportionment, Illinois would have several more seats in the House of Representatives. Wentworth, who had observed his

twenty-fifth birthday in March, was now eligible, willing, and well known throughout the northern counties, where the population had grown the most rapidly. The foundations for a public career had been carefully laid. His period of political apprenticeship was drawing to a close.

CHAPTER III

Congressman from Illinois

I was running for Congress . . . and I had to be sociable with my constituents. Sometimes I invited them to drink, and sometimes they invited me; but, whoever did the inviting, there were no refusals.—*John Wentworth, quoted in INTER OCEAN, July 1, 1883.*

WENTWORTH ACCEPTED the defeat of Van Buren in 1840 with sour frustration, and his temper did not improve as he watched the antics of the new legislature which assembled at Springfield late in November. Fresh from its election by the people, this body not only voted to authorize another suspension of specie payments by the State Bank, but it also adjourned without lifting a finger to rescue the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Long John's reaction to this double offense was swift and furious. In the columns of the *Democrat* he launched an unrestrained attack upon the entire legislature, charging that its members were unable to perform their duties properly because they spent most of their time "at drinking, gambling and bawdy houses."¹

From the Whigs, of course, he expected only villainy. It was the behavior of the Democratic legislators that outraged him. They were, after all, in control of both houses, and the suspension act could not have passed without their consent, nor

could aid for the canal have failed without defections in their ranks. Ebenezer Peck and the other members from the canal district had miserably bungled the task of securing an appropriation for further work upon the vital project, thereby justifying the widespread pre-election doubts concerning their fitness. Peck, who could accomplish nothing worthwhile for his constituents, was more successful at realizing a personal profit from the disappointing legislative session. Having vigorously supported a measure to pack the state Supreme Court with additional Democrats, he was subsequently named clerk of the enlarged tribunal. To critical observers like Wentworth, this suggested the consummation of a disreputable bargain, a payment for services performed.

It was at this point that Long John's private dislike for Peck finally exploded into the open. In the *Democrat's* general denunciation of the state legislature, the choicest epithets were now reserved for the "midnight clerk," whom it depicted as a political cormorant, motivated only by his greed for the spoils of office. No man to turn the other cheek, Peck responded by publishing a long letter in which he welcomed the attack as an improvement upon several years of "covert malice." Wentworth, he continued, was "mean by nature, a coward from instinct, a liar from habit and full of all parsimonious and grovelling propensities." One by one, he replied to the accusations of the *Democrat*, but regretted the need for doing so. "I am wrestling with excrement," he concluded, "and . . . I am sure to get defiled."²

Such words did not invite reconciliation, and the *Democrat* continued to lay an editorial lash upon the man who had once controlled it. One September day in 1842, Peck tried a more strenuous kind of retaliation. Encountering Wentworth on the front steps of a Belvidere hotel, he took a firm grip on his silver-handled cane and swung from the heels. But his aim was poor, his footing uncertain, and he finished by tumbling into John's long arms, there to remain imprisoned until he forswore another attempt.³ The very absurdity of this skirmish would have shamed some men into a truce, but neither Peck nor Wentworth carried a drop of forgiving blood in his veins, and time only deepened their hatred for each other. It was the beginning of a forty-year feud.

One quarrel inevitably led to another. For his reckless assaults upon leading Democrats, Wentworth was sharply rep-

rimanded by the *Illinois State Register*, which, from its central position at Springfield, kept a paternal eye upon party activities throughout the state. Editor William Walters, who only a year before had ranked the Chicagoan "amongst the most able editors in the United States," now deplored his incendiary conduct and defended the victims of his tirades. But Long John would not be silenced. He was, in fact, rather happy to exchange a few blows with this dangerous newspaper rival, whose lucrative position as state printer he coveted. Walters, the *Democrat* asserted, was a ringleader of the iniquitous "Springfield clique," which was ruling, corrupting, and ruining the Jacksonian party in Illinois.⁴

Most infuriating for Wentworth was the Springfield editor's forthright defense of Peck. Long John had begun to see his enemy's hand everywhere, and repeated denials failed to convince him that Peck was not writing the *Register's* editorials. Such an obsession, Walters thought, was the mark of "a diseased mind or disturbed conscience." Did Wentworth desire to control everything, the *Register* demanded, and if he could not control, was he determined to destroy? The reply from Chicago was already familiar: "Death to the Springfield clique!" For nearly two years the battle raged between Wentworth and Walters, and other Democratic editors were drawn into the fight, while delighted Whig leaders looked on in the hope that the two "cats of Kilkenny" would devour each other.⁵

To disrupt his own party and traduce its most respected leaders might seem suicidal strategy for a young man who had his eye on public office. But Long John, it developed, knew exactly what he was doing. His censorious editorials struck a responsive chord in the northern counties, where there was widespread discontent over the state's heavy indebtedness. The men of that region were recent settlers, and they had no desire to pay for financial follies committed before their arrival. Some of them even began to agitate for the transfer of their counties from Illinois to Wisconsin territory, in line with the original boundary provisions of the Northwest Ordinance. If his later recollections are credible, Wentworth refused to join the separatist movement in spite of hints that a seat in the United States Senate could be his. But he did carry on a profitable flirtation with the malcontents, and his wholesale indictment of Springfield politicians was nicely calculated to exploit

the spirit of unrest that existed in settlements along the Wisconsin boundary.⁶

In the contest for governor in 1842, Wentworth again voiced northern annoyance at the domination of state politics by men from central and southern Illinois. He did not conceal his displeasure at the Democrats' nomination of Adam W. Snyder, a resident of St. Clair County who had shown little enthusiasm for the Illinois and Michigan Canal. And when Snyder died shortly before the election, Wentworth and other northern leaders stepped quickly forward with their own hand-picked substitute. He was Thomas Ford, long familiar to Chicagoans as a state circuit judge, and recently named to the expanded Supreme Court. The *State Register* also decided to accept Ford, and a hastily arranged meeting of Democrats at Springfield designated him as the official candidate. According to a contemporary, when Wentworth received word of the nomination, he jumped into a wagon and drove nearly all night to the place on the Fox River where Ford was holding court. Rousing the judge from bed at an early morning hour, he broke the exciting news, without doing injustice to his own part in the victory.⁷

Ford's election should have mollified Wentworth, but the *Democrat* kept up its attack on Springfield until the final weeks of 1842. Then its tone began to change. The role of firebrand had, for the moment, yielded its maximum benefits. And with the congressional election approaching, a retreat from his lonely and precarious limb of truculent independence to the broader, safer boughs of party regularity seemed the way of wisdom to Long John. On December 14, he announced that no more letters attacking the *State Register* would be accepted for publication in the *Democrat*.⁸ Walters received this peace offer with justifiable suspicion, but relations between the two men did mellow perceptibly in the months that followed.

Although he never made a formal announcement of his candidacy, Wentworth had already begun to campaign seriously for the potential new seat in Congress. He wrote letters by the score to influential Democrats, and spent many weeks of the year 1842 touring the northern counties on one pretext or another. He had taken a leave of absence from his editorial duties to study law at Harvard during the summer of 1841, and had been admitted to the Illinois bar upon his return. Now he joined other lawyers on the court circuit, ostensibly to practice

his new profession, but actually in order to participate in the political caucuses that enlivened the off-hours of every session.

Nonpolitical lectures were another means of displaying himself to voters, and he stood ready at the slightest invitation to salute "The Dignity of Labor," or analyze "Agriculture as a Science." In the summer of 1842, he traveled the width of the state, delivering over and over an address on "The Fulfillment of Prophecies," material for which was undoubtedly cribbed from the sermons of his favorite minister, the Reverend Isaac T. Hinton of the First Baptist Church of Chicago.⁹

Whig editors had a good time lampooning Long John's "prophetic tour," but they found his interest in post office affairs less amusing. William Stuart had left the *Chicago American* to become the city's postmaster in 1841, and had then remained loyal to President John Tyler when the latter broke with Whig leaders over reviving a central bank. He was now under heavy fire from the newspaper he had so recently edited because its new proprietor venerated Henry Clay and looked upon the Tyler men as "traitors." Here was an opportunity that Wentworth could not ignore. He set out to reconcile his old differences with Stuart, and succeeded so well that he soon won the post office patronage away from the *American*. By 1842, according to the indignant editor of that newspaper, this long-legged votary of Andrew Jackson had so far ingratiated himself with a nominally Whig administration that he was once again laying down the law to postmasters in the neighboring counties and conducting himself in general as though the Democrats had returned to power in Washington.¹⁰

Early in 1843, the legislature finally redistricted the state. The new fourth district included sixteen northeastern counties which, according to their past performances at the polls, would vote overwhelmingly Democratic. So the party nomination, by a convention called to meet on May 18 at Joliet, was widely regarded as equivalent to election. Among the aspirants were some well-known names in state politics: James Turney, once attorney general; Theophilus Smith, recently resigned from the state Supreme Court; James M. Strode, former state senator and register of the Chicago Land Office; Dr. Richard Murphy, who had served in the legislature. Each of these experienced Democratic leaders regarded Wentworth as a presumptuous upstart and ridiculed the idea of sending a boy to do a man's work in Washington. But their supporters were flabbergasted

upon arriving in Joliet to find that some county conventions had specifically instructed their delegates for the impudent young editor, and that he could easily command enough votes to win on the first ballot.¹¹

Such careful planning and efficient organization were repugnant to men who had learned their politics in a more artless and informal school. Charges of fraud filled the air, Dr. Murphy shouted in vain for an investigation, and a number of disgruntled delegates walked out. But the convention went right ahead with the nomination of Wentworth by a vote of 58 to 11. The uproar did not end there, however. In some communities groups of dissatisfied Democrats came together and repudiated the action of the convention. After several weeks of confusion the opposition crystallized around Murphy. A friend of Ebenezer Peck and a member of the "Canal delegation" which the *Democrat* had so relentlessly excoriated, Murphy agreed to run as an independent, a move which would probably divide the Democratic vote and hand the election to the Whig candidate, Giles Spring.¹²

Now it was a worried Long John's turn to plead for party regularity as he made his final round of campaign speeches. The results were at first not encouraging, but the pressure of opinion was working gradually in his favor. The *Register*, which he had so wisely placated a few months before, urged Murphy, however just his grievance, to withdraw from the race for the sake of the party. And it is said that Governor Ford lent his influence to the same end.¹³ Finally, on July 26, less than two weeks before the election, Murphy retired from the contest, and the way to Washington was cleared for the editor of the Chicago *Democrat*. A desperate Whig-inspired rumor that he had been killed in a fall from a horse failed to stop the trend in his favor. He carried twelve of the sixteen counties and defeated Spring by 7,552 votes to 5,931.¹⁴

There was no time, however, for a prolonged celebration. The election had been held a year late, and Long John was obliged to put his personal affairs hastily in order, commit the *Democrat* to Bradley's care, and hurry off to Washington for the opening session of the Twenty-eighth Congress. A triumphal detour through New Hampshire, and the flattering admiration lavished upon him in Sandwich, reinforced his self-confidence, but it did not alter the fact that he was the

youngest and greenest of the new crop of statesmen who were converging upon the capital city.

Washington in 1843 was itself a raw-boned youngster with the unfinished aspect of a frontier community. "It is sometimes called the City of Magnificent Distances," Charles Dickens had written during his visit the year before, "but it might with greater propriety be termed the City of Magnificent Intentions." Although its population had now passed twenty-five thousand, the city seemed almost to mock the ambitious plan which Charles L'Enfant had submitted a half century earlier. The system of streets was incomplete and chaotic, with little paving and no lights at night except on Pennsylvania Avenue. The public and private buildings were inconveniently sprawled over a wide area, and in between there were great open stretches of unkempt land where trash was piled and pigs rooted for their subsistence. The plague of open sewers had not been removed, and one such stream stagnated near the White House to form an offensive marsh.

It was not a scene to impress touring celebrities, but for the congressman-elect, Washington was a city of excitement in which the echoes of past events and voices mingled subtly with his own youthful aspirations. The Jacksonian revolution was now a completed chapter of American political history, and nearly seven years had gone by since the old General's retirement to the Hermitage. But his influence lingered in the capital, and many of his trusted lieutenants were still there for a young disciple to meet: Silas Wright and Thomas Hart Benton sat in the Senate, Frank Blair continued to edit the *Globe*, Amos Kendall struggled vainly to make a living from the publication of his *Expositor*. Webster, Clay, and Calhoun had all retired temporarily to private life, and the absence of this famous anti-Jackson triumvirate somewhat dimmed the luster of Washington politics. But another ancient foe was on hand as usual. John Quincy Adams had arrived to begin his seventh consecutive term as representative from the Plymouth district of Massachusetts. As a boy of eleven he had accompanied his father on the latter's historic mission to European courts during the Revolution. Now, sixty-five years later, he led the fight against the congressional "gag" on antislavery petitions, and thus linked in his own person the founding of the republic with the issue that would almost destroy it. Wentworth, during his recent campaign, had pleaded for votes so that he could go to

Washington and answer Adams' "Federal lies." ¹⁵ It would have been a formidable task, and fortunately for him, he did not undertake it. Slowly a grudging admiration replaced his partisan dislike for the defiant old man.

If one judges by later achievements, the members of the House were this year a more distinguished aggregation than the senators. In addition to Adams, there were Andrew Johnson, whom an assassin's bullet would make the seventeenth president; Hannibal Hamlin, Lincoln's running-mate in 1860; Alexander Stephens, future vice-president of the Confederacy; Hamilton Fish, destined for distinguished service as secretary of state under Grant; Henry Wise, governor of Virginia at the time of John Brown's raid; Robert Dale Owen, the militant social reformer; Joshua Giddings, relentless critic of slavery, whose Ohio constituents had just returned him to Congress after his resignation under official censure.

And at Wentworth's side in the Illinois delegation was a man who more than any other would dominate American politics in the 1850's. Stephen A. Douglas, defeated in his first campaign for Congress five years before, now represented the new and curiously shaped fifth district, which curved along the north bank of the Illinois River from Peoria to the Mississippi. He was thus a spokesman for the river interests of his state, even as Long John voiced the desires of the lake region. Both sturdy Jacksonians of the expansive Western brand, the two men were seen together often during their early days in Washington, attracting many smiles because of their striking physical differences.

The midterm elections had swept the Democratic party into overwhelming control of the House, but the Whigs clung to a narrow majority in the Senate. A third force in the government was the isolated President, John Tyler, who, after succeeding Harrison in 1841, had alienated the leaders of his own party without winning the confidence of the Democrats. With power so divided, few persons expected any significant legislation from the new session. It was more likely, with the contest of 1844 looming ahead, to spend its time in the promotion of favorites to succeed Tyler. Henry Clay, already certain of carrying his party's standard once more, had left the Senate in order to give full time to his campaign. The Democrats were not yet so united upon their man. The largest group, which included Wentworth, looked upon Van Buren's defeat in 1840 as an ac-

cident or the product of Whig trickery, and was determined that he should have another chance. From this view there was vigorous dissent by supporters of Lewis Cass, James Buchanan, and John C. Calhoun. Calhoun's candidacy, which had begun at least as early as the election of Harrison, was the most significant because it represented a sectional challenge to Van Buren's leadership and an early manifestation of the impending division in the party. Back in the Democratic fold after several years of collaboration with the Whigs, Calhoun had been maneuvering for an alliance with certain radical labor groups in the North, and there was also good reason to believe that he would eventually gain the support of President Tyler.¹⁶

But Calhoun's aspirations had received a serious blow in 1842 when the congressional elections showed the Van Buren forces dominant in the North and strong in the South. Democratic organization of the lower house would obviously be the final test of the South Carolinian's political strength. So there was more at stake than the mere choice of a speaker when House Democrats held their first caucus on December 2. A large majority voted for John W. Jones of Virginia, the Van Buren man; and Calhoun, all hope gone, promptly announced his withdrawal from the presidential contest.¹⁷ Van Buren's nomination now seemed almost as certain as Clay's.

Wentworth was delighted with these developments. He was also keenly aware that his own campaign for re-election, if he desired more than a single term, must begin immediately. Illinois congressional elections would be held in August, the nominating conventions in June. He had but a few months to impress the people back home. And from the very opening of the session on December 4, he must anticipate the political consequences of every word spoken and every vote cast.

One issue perennially embarrassing for Northern Democrats confronted him before the first day had passed. A motion to adopt the rules of the previous session brought John Quincy Adams to his feet with an amendment to remove the gag rule under which abolitionist petitions were not received.¹⁸ As usual, the argument raged intermittently for several months. To the experienced members present it was an old story, but Wentworth was watching Adams in action for the first time, and he saw a repetition of the slashing style and shrewd parliamentary strategy by which the grim old warrior, since 1836,

had been plunging the House periodically into tumultuous confusion.

Unlike his colleagues in the Illinois delegation, Long John could ill afford to flout the antislavery pressure groups. The wind of abolitionist doctrines now swept in steadily upon Chicago from the Western Reserve and points farther east. In the election of 1843, far more votes for the Liberty party had been cast in his fourth district than in the rest of the state combined.¹⁹ And yet, at this point in his career, Wentworth despised abolitionism and viewed the petitions campaign as a Whig trick to destroy Democratic unity. Knowing that party orthodoxy in the past had embraced the gag rule, he voted against the Adams amendment on the opening-day test, and, in the weeks that followed, his adherence to this decision was consistent, if somewhat uneasy.

But it was soon apparent that increased pressures from home had stripped the controversial rule of much Northern support. When the climax of the struggle for this session was reached on February 27, a move to retain the rule was soundly defeated, 86 to 106. Wentworth's futile affirmative vote was one of only seventeen from the entire North, and in every free state except Illinois there had been serious defections among Democrats. However, the hour of vindication for the right of petition had not quite arrived. The dismayed slavery forces hastily reformed their ranks, and Southern Democrats ominously reminded their wayward Northern comrades that Martin Van Buren was still to be nominated. Under such pressure, enough free-state Democrats changed sides the following day to carry, by one vote, a motion to lay the whole subject upon the table.²⁰

So once again the head of "Old Man Eloquent" was bowed in defeat, for the gag rule now continued in effect throughout the session. At every stage in the battle, Wentworth had stood forth as one of the few unflinching allies of the South, and from northeastern Illinois there came disturbing words of disappointment and protest. Fortunately for him there were other issues less thorny to handle, other votes more popular to be cast.

In his first letter for the *Democrat* from Washington, Wentworth had asserted that congressmen should be "practical businessmen," attending to the "wants and interests of their constituents," instead of showing off with lengthy speeches.²¹

This was little more than a cheerful resignation to the inevitable, for a legislator, he soon learned, was quite inescapably a servant of the people. Early in the session, hungry office seekers solicited his help at every corner. And soon there was a steady stream of letters from home to command his attention. Claimants against the Federal government, veterans seeking pensions, pre-emptioners with snarled land titles—all wanted his help. Some writers merely offered advice or requested copies of government documents. Others enclosed petitions for new postal facilities, or against the annexation of Texas. The purely physical labor of correspondence was itself enormous, and on his congressman's pay of eight dollars a day, Wentworth was in no position to hire adequate secretarial help. In the quiet of his room, or at his desk on the floor of the House, he worked away at the onerous task, lapsing sometimes into an almost illegible scrawl, and closing each reply with an inevitable "Hastily yours, Jno. Wentworth." More carefully composed were his regular communications for the "Washington Correspondence" column of the *Democrat*.

Scrupulously regular in his attendance at sessions of the House, party caucuses, and meetings of the Committee on Territories to which he had been appointed, Long John also plunged eagerly into Washington social life. He visited the White House, attended Dolly Madison's receptions, and on New Year's Day made the rounds of open houses without partisan discrimination. One day in February, 1844, he and other congressmen enjoyed a "ride" on the *Princeton*. Down to Mount Vernon and back, the Navy's new warship carried the distinguished passengers, firing her widely advertised cannon that used forty pounds of powder for every charge. The party returned to Washington without mishap, but a similar excursion a few days later ended in tragedy when one of the great guns exploded, killing two members of the Cabinet and several other persons.²²

Meanwhile, Wentworth's determination to abstain from speechmaking in the House had already begun to dissolve. Senator Samuel McRoberts of Illinois had died the previous spring, and his colleagues thrust upon Long John the chore of making the official announcement and delivering a eulogy. On December 13, therefore, with much self-consciousness and apologetic reference to his youthfulness and inexperience, he launched into a prepared address which lasted ten or fifteen

minutes and was phrased in the expected florid style of the nineteenth century ("The memory of his transcendent virtues still lingers like twilight hues when the bright summer's sun is set").²³ Once pushed into the waters of oratory, he found them exhilarating and was never again noticeably timid about claiming his share of debate time.

His associates came to regard Wentworth as a hard-working and reliable young man, but his tendency to court attention by playing the clown led some of them to depend upon him more for comic relief than for responsible statesmanship. When he was called forward on one occasion to preside over the Committee of the Whole, the members, "feeling sensibly that fun must follow," began to chuckle expectantly, and they were not disappointed. In a "most ludicrous and amusing scene," facetious motions were offered to plague the lanky chairman, who cheerfully accepted the role of buffoon and, banging the gavel merrily, dispensed arbitrary rulings with a reckless disregard for the principles of parliamentary procedure.²⁴ It was all a harmless frolic, but such antics were not likely to elevate a man to leadership. During his entire congressional career, Long John was never offered the chairmanship of a permanent committee.

When pleading the cause of his own district, however, Wentworth was grimly in earnest and had no time for tomfoolery. Chicago's future depended in part upon the benevolence of the federal government, and as its first spokesman in Congress, he had a long list of favors to ask. One month after taking his seat in the House he introduced a bill to make Chicago a port of entry, and he followed it a few days later with a measure proposing to grant additional land to Illinois for the completion of her canal. But such benefits, he soon learned, were not to be had for the asking. The canal grant was smothered in committee, and although the port-of-entry bill passed the House in June, the Senate quickly rejected it. Two more years went by before it finally became law.²⁵

Armed with facts and figures to demonstrate the need for navigational improvements on the Great Lakes, Wentworth had come to Washington prepared also to fight for a comprehensive rivers-and-harbors appropriation. Here was the cause with which his name would always be most closely associated. Through the years he crusaded for it with such perseverance and intensity that a Southern congressman eventually referred

to him as the "putative father of this system of internal improvements."²⁶

It was on January 9, 1844, that he delivered his first speech on the subject in Congress. Pointing out that the internal improvement system had been almost entirely dropped since the session of 1838-1839, he declared: "Too long have the people of nearly half of our Union, from the disproportion of former representation on this floor, been knocking at the doors of Congress . . . and demanding their unquestionable deserts." In vivid detail he described the havoc wrought by storms upon lake shipping and the toll of lives taken among the lake sailors—all because of inadequate lighthouse and harbor facilities. Such cold neglect, he added, was in striking contrast to the generous expenditures for navigation aids on the Atlantic coast.

And then there was the menace of John Bull. Cleverly, Wentworth tied his cause to the star of manifest destiny, and exploited the country's growing mistrust of Great Britain. The contest for Oregon might end in war, he asserted, and the lakes would be the key to victory in any such conflict. A few dollars spent immediately upon harbors could easily save the nation from disaster in the near future.²⁷

As the debate upon the proposed bill for Western rivers and harbors droned intermittently on, Wentworth saw more clearly each day that opposition to it was partially camouflaged, and that its most dangerous enemies were the strict-constructionist Democrats from the South. He protested vigorously against excessive amending, which seemed designed to ambush the measure. And he resisted all efforts to separate the lake appropriations from the rivers. When a Democrat from Mississippi made one final attempt at such a division, Long John rejected "these proffers from the enemy," and warned: "Once get these two great interests [rivers and lake harbors] antagonist to each other, and our opponents have accomplished their object."

The Southerners were especially hostile, on constitutional grounds, to the inclusion of funds for the Illinois River, which lay completely within the bounds of a single state. With Douglas ill, the burden of defending this particular item fell largely upon Wentworth, and he argued most earnestly that when the stream was linked by canal with Lake Michigan, it would be part of a great interstate waterway serving the whole interior of the continent. On the day of decision, however, enough sup-

port for the entire bill could be mustered only by deleting the Illinois River appropriation. Once this had been done, the measure was then approved by 108 votes to 72.

Although this last-minute disappointment for Illinois did not seriously diminish Wentworth's jubilation at the bill's passage, the roll call of House members on the final test must have been disconcerting to a young Jacksonian. Thirty-one Northern and thirty-four Southern Democrats had combined to produce nearly all the adverse votes. "By God," Long John roared, when the Whigs taunted him with belonging to the party that opposed internal improvements, "I feel ashamed that such a charge should be made."²⁸

Passed later by an overwhelming vote in the Senate, the measure then went to the president, who swallowed his constitutional scruples and signed it. The \$30,000 which represented Chicago's share of the total appropriation was immediately used for dredging her harbor channel and extending the North Pier to a length of almost four thousand feet. This momentarily halted the choking up of the harbor, but soon another sand bar would begin to form, and the desperate cry for federal aid would be renewed. As relentless and enduring as the lake currents which built these frustrating barriers was the pressure upon Wentworth for more and ever more federal expenditures upon the Chicago harbor.²⁹

The rivers-and-harbors appropriation was one of the few important enactments of the year. Pure indifference retarded the legislative process. John Quincy Adams complained to his diary that a full fifty members of the House were habitually absent, and that half of the time there was no quorum. And with the warmth of spring reminding them that the national conventions were near, those in regular attendance grew more partisan and short-tempered. "Sir, this is the President-making session," said Wentworth on one occasion, "and from all such but little good has ever been expected or experienced. Jealousy thwarts every good intention, and mocks every honest effort." Yet he was himself one of the worst offenders. In March he unleashed a long and venomous attack upon Henry Clay, accusing him of immorality and infidelity in a speech which Adams characterized as one of "vulgar, hypocritical buffoonery." Whig abuse of Van Buren was no more restrained, and the running battle of slander reached a climax on April 23 with actual gunfire on the floor of the House. A Kentucky Whig de-

fended Clay's record with such vigor that he was assaulted by a New York Democrat. In the fracas that followed, a pistol was discharged, wounding a policeman standing by.³⁰

With their minds often plainly elsewhere, the national law-makers went through the motions of governing the country. The Tyler administration was a transitional phase of American politics when vibrant new interests were pushing aside the old issues which had excited the country in Jackson's time. Long John had his chance to cast a vote for lower tariffs, to support a resolution condemning the idea of a national bank, to help repeal Clay's Distribution law.³¹ But far more intoxicating than these well-worn questions was the theme of national expansion, and like so many other Americans in 1844, Wentworth was passionately stirred by the words "Texas" and "Oregon" which rang through the country.

Ever since the rejection of her offer to join the Union, Texas had entered upon a program of vigorous diplomacy that seemed to carry her more and more into the orbit of Great Britain. This trend caused concern everywhere in the United States, but particularly among Southerners, who predicted all kinds of baleful consequences if Texas should settle into the status of a British protectorate. At the same time the controversy over the Northwest boundary was coming to a head. With Western pioneers moving into Oregon and clamoring for the extension of American laws and government to the area, the days of joint occupation were obviously numbered. London's refusal to accept the forty-ninth parallel as a compromise line had enhanced the popular appeal of a dubious American claim to all of Oregon, which had been advanced by the more boisterous apostles of manifest destiny. At the time that Wentworth took his seat in Congress, the Tyler administration was working eagerly to arrange for the early annexation of Texas, and continuing also the negotiations with Great Britain on the subject of Oregon.

Long John was an enthusiastic expansionist who favored the acquisition of Texas, in spite of bitter opposition from anti-slavery elements in his constituency. But he came from the heart of the "54° 40'-or-fight" country, and the fate of Oregon was of much greater concern to him. As early as January 4, he introduced a resolution calling upon the President to submit all correspondence on the subject to Congress. During the following month, he presented a joint resolution from the Illinois

legislature urging the abrogation of the joint-occupancy agreement, the establishment of a territorial government in Oregon, and opposition to the surrender of any portion of the region. When his own Committee on Territories brought in its report on Oregon, he worked successfully to get an extra ten thousand copies printed. And when a resolution demanding all of Oregon was tabled, he voted in the negative with other militant expansionists.³²

Long before this—on January 24, 1844—he had attacked the problem in a full-dress speech that was filled with belligerent references to Britain. “This nation will never consent that she shall have Texas or California,” he declared, “and . . . we do not care how soon she loses Canada.” Americans, he promised, would co-operate more fully with the next Canadian insurrection. As for Oregon, not one single inch of that coveted territory would be conceded to the British. Eventually, some Jackson would arise to defend the mouth of the Columbia as Old Hickory had protected the Mississippi. “When our rights are infringed,” he blustered, “we are not the men to be satisfied with peace.”³³

In his articles for the *Democrat*, Wentworth expressed confidence that there would be no repetition in the Northwest of Webster’s sacrifice of American land in the Maine boundary settlement two years before. Among congressmen, he reported, Oregon was more popular than Texas. The latter would be annexed only to forestall the British, and it would be divided into five states, at least two of them nonslave.³⁴

Before long, however, flecks of doubt began to appear on the surface of his optimism. It was strange, he wrote, that “those who have so much to say about Texas do not remonstrate against our giving up an inch of Oregon.”³⁵ Uneasily, he contrasted the president’s apparent dawdling on Oregon with his vigorous activity in behalf of Texas. More Southern in orientation than ever with Calhoun’s appointment as secretary of state, the Tyler administration in April triumphantly submitted a treaty of annexation to the Senate, only to ruin its own cause with tactless proslavery arguments for the acquisition. The Senate’s rejection of the treaty was discouragingly decisive, but Tyler and Calhoun did not give up. While the sting of defeat was still fresh, they hastily changed their strategy and began to promote annexation by joint resolution, for which a majority vote of each house would suffice. Much as he wanted Texas,

Wentworth found this Tyler version of manifest destiny too lopsided for comfort. "Why this haste to add to the south," he asked, "and yet dilatory action whilst we are losing from the invasion of Great Britain on the north?"³⁶

Before the new drive for annexation could get under way, Congress reached its date of adjournment. Meanwhile, Texas had become the critical issue of the presidential campaign. To no one's surprise the Whigs assembled at Baltimore nominated Clay on May 1, but the Democratic convention, held in the same city four weeks later, did not follow the expected pattern. An avowed supporter of Van Buren, like the majority of Northern Democrats, Wentworth had written the ex-president in December, assuring him that he would receive the votes of the Illinois delegates. By May, however, he was admitting a drift away from his favorite. The greatest handicap for Van Buren was his own letter of April 20, opposing the annexation of Texas. Wentworth justified this pronouncement on the grounds that a strong pro-Texas stand would have alienated antislavery elements in the party.³⁷ Yet it soon appeared that Van Buren had misread the American temper and overestimated the firmness of his support in certain parts of the South. Southern insistence upon the two-thirds rule blocked his nomination and led to the selection of James K. Polk, former speaker of the House and governor of Tennessee.

Long John was not without resentment at this new display of slave-state perversity, but he was quicker than many Van Buren men to perceive the strength of the unexpected nominee and to submerge his own disappointment in party loyalty. The nomination, after all, had received the blessing of Andrew Jackson, and this alone would probably have satisfied Wentworth. Beyond that, Polk was an enthusiastic expansionist, outspokenly for Texas and 54° 40'. As a Southerner, he could reunite the divided party and perhaps recover the faction which had withdrawn to support Tyler on an independent ticket. Also, the Whigs had been preparing to campaign against Van Buren and were as disconcerted by Polk as the Democrats had been four years earlier by the nomination of Harrison. Wentworth thoroughly relished this discomfiture of the enemy, and, in a moment of friskiness a few days after the Democratic convention, he bobbed up from his seat in the House to offer a facetious resolution:

That, for the purpose of economizing the public time . . . all members of this House, who have made speeches at this session, against Mr. Van Buren, have permission to erase the name of Mr. Van Buren, therefrom, and substitute instead the name of James K. Polk; and that the officers of this House be requested to buy those anti-Van Buren speeches of the Clay club for wrapping paper.³⁸

Long John's interest in the impending campaign was intensified by the fact that the opponent this time was no worn-out military hero, but the advocate of banking monopoly, the enemy of free land and western expansion, the founder and personification of Whiggery—Henry Clay. When Congress adjourned on June 17, 1844, few Democrats were more ardent than John Wentworth in their endorsement of Polk. Few were more confident—outwardly, at least—that a great new era of Jacksonianism would begin as soon as “Young Hickory” entered the White House.

CHAPTER IV

The Making of an Insurgent

The slaveholders have got their Texas, and more, too. But where is Oregon?—free Oregon? Look in the mouth of John Bull for five and two-thirds degrees of it!—*John Wentworth, in the WEEKLY CHICAGO DEMOCRAT, May 9, 1848.*

DURING THE USUAL late-hour flurry of activity before adjournment in June, 1844, Wentworth had waited anxiously for news from the fourth district convention of Democrats in Illinois. Would they nominate him for a second term? There were, he knew, powerful voices opposing him. Led by Isaac N. Arnold, some of his enemies had established a rival Democratic newspaper in Chicago, and in the spring mayoral election, they had combined with the Whigs to elect an anti-Wentworth ticket. Overnight, the *Democrat* found itself stripped of its printing patronage by the new city council. "The 'Long John' dynasty is entirely broken up and the sceptre is departed," a Chicago Whig wrote to Congressman John J. Hardin.¹

But the setback soon proved to be a trifling one. By June, the Wentworth machine had recovered control of Cook County, and the district convention was little more than an assembly of Long John's friends. The good news reached him while he was still in Washington: not a single delegate had voted against his renomination.²

Eager to begin campaigning, he headed for home as soon as Congress had adjourned, stopping briefly on the way to address a Democratic mass meeting at Cleveland.³ There was little time for rest when he arrived in Chicago. After some final instructions to Bradley on editorial strategy, he hurried off for a hectic month of stumping his district.

Laying aside his new suit of clothes for a shabbier outfit that was more suitable for horse-and-wagon travel, and more ingratiating in the eyes of the country folk whose votes he was soliciting, Long John endured stormy weather and floods, recurring illness and progressive fatigue, as he made his politician's way through twelve counties in four weeks. On the afternoon of July 8, 1844, he defended his record and excoriated the Whigs from a platform at Elgin. By evening, he was repeating his words for the people of Dundee. Then he went on to St. Charles, Naperville, Aurora, Oswego, Yorkville, and Georgetown. After a pause for the Sabbath, he continued: Princeton, Peru, Ottawa, Indian Grove, Lexington, Bloomington, then Sunday off; LeRoy, Mahomet, Urbana, Sydney, Homer, Chillicothe (Vermilion County), Georgetown, Danville, then Sunday off; Milford, Middleport, Concord, Wilmington, Joliet, Plainfield, and, on August 3, back to Chicago for a climactic mass meeting.⁴

All along the route faithful Democrats turned out to cheer his peppery speeches, but in nearly every audience there was also a vociferous group of Liberty men, who needled him for his stand on Texas and the gag rule. About Texas he cautiously said as little as possible, but his numerous votes in the House against the admission of antislavery petitions must somehow be explained. Confessing to a feeling of indifference on the whole subject, he nevertheless defended the gag rule as a device which prevented the waste of public time and preserved the unity of the Democratic party. Asked if he would oppose the rule in the future, he replied, "I do not consider it worth contending for." The abolitionist *Western Citizen* thereupon accused him of favoring "perpetual slavery," while the *Chicago Journal*, the new Whig organ, labeled him a "doughface."⁵

The results of the election on August 5 clearly demonstrated that the "sceptre" had not yet departed from Wentworth's grasp. He won an easy victory over his Whig opponent, Buckner Morris—9,526 to 5,910—and even carried Chicago by over five hundred votes. But the biggest surprise was the strong

showing of John Henderson, the Liberty party candidate, who polled 1,875 votes. Wentworth noted this development with vague uneasiness, even though it was but a footnote to the story of his own victory. In percentage of total vote, both the Democrats and abolitionists had gained ground at the expense of the Whigs. But if the latter should ever engineer a coalition with the prospering Liberty men, the supremacy of Jacksonian Democracy in the region might be brought to an abrupt end. With abolitionist strength negligible in the other six districts, Wentworth was alone among Illinois congressmen in facing this alarming possibility. And he fully realized that each passing month only intensified the danger, for more and more settlers were pouring in from the Northeast to make the area around Chicago a rival of the Western Reserve as a center of radical antislavery sentiment.⁶

After studying the election results and considering their implications, Long John abruptly adopted a different tone in discussing the gag rule. The *Democrat* announced that upon his return to Congress, he would respect the wishes of a majority of his constituents on the issue. And "to say the least," the paper added, "it is very doubtful whether that majority would advise the adoption of that rule again."⁷ By October, in the final weeks of the presidential campaign, he was artfully blaming the gag rule upon the Whigs and Henry Clay, whom the *Democrat* vilified as a slave trader, and therefore a "duelist, a gambler, and a debauchee."⁸

The presidential election of 1844 was one of the closest in American history. Tyler had endorsed Polk and withdrawn from the race in August, but the Liberty party remained in the field, and its candidate, James Birney, may have drawn enough votes away from Clay in New York to give that state and the nation to the Democrats. However narrow his victory and obscure its causes, the election of Polk was widely interpreted by his supporters as a mandate for lower tariffs, a reinstatement of the Independent Treasury system, and—most of all—an aggressive expansion to the west by the "re-annexation" of Texas and the "re-occupation" of Oregon.

That November of Democratic triumph was memorable in yet another way for John Wentworth. Immediately after the election he hastened aboard an eastbound lake steamer, and on November 13, he stood before a Presbyterian minister in Troy, New York, to exchange the vows of marriage with Rox-

anna Marie Loomis.⁹ There are no records to reveal when he met or how he courted this only daughter of a wealthy upstate businessman. Indeed, Marie was always a shadowy figure in his life, and her demonstrable influence upon his career was so slight that one easily forgets he ever deserted bachelorhood.

Earlier the same autumn John had made his first purchase of land in Chicago—two lots in the block where the great Marshall Field department store now stands—intending, perhaps, to build a home there for his bride. But Marie was strongly attached to her parents, and since her husband would be spending much of his time in Washington anyhow, she preferred to remain in Troy. Gradually the life of the couple fell into a regular although peculiar pattern. Marie occasionally visited Chicago for a few weeks, and she often accompanied her husband on his pilgrimages to New Hampshire, but their only real home was an apartment in her parents' house, where John stopped on each trip between Chicago and Washington. All five of their children were born in Troy, and three of them died there in infancy. Throughout his twenty-six years of married life, Wentworth was never more than a part-time husband and father. Neither his marriage in 1844 nor Marie's death in 1870 seriously altered his pattern of living. He remained at heart a transient, for whom the bustle and confusion of a hotel were far more attractive than the orderly routines of domesticity.

Wentworth did not permit his new role of bridegroom to interfere with his professional duties. He was, in fact, the first Illinois congressman to arrive in Washington for the final session of Tyler's administration. He went immediately to call upon President Tyler, who had also taken a wife since the adjournment of Congress. Now completely within the Democratic camp after his support of Polk, the president had been persuaded by Wentworth to remove the federal district attorney and the register of the Land Office in Chicago. Both Whigs, they were to be replaced by two of Long John's Democratic friends.

The outcry from Illinois that greeted this maneuver did not issue exclusively from Whigs. Leading Democrats were also indignant at Wentworth. Whatever his excuses, this was obviously an attempt to steal a march upon the Illinois congressional delegation—particularly the senators—and force the hand of the incoming administration in the awarding of patronage. Personal vindictiveness, his enemies charged, had moved Long

John to engineer these late-hour dismissals by Tyler. The Democrat whom Polk was expected to name district attorney, they pointed out, was Isaac N. Arnold, Wentworth's political and journalistic rival. And John H. Kinzie, the Whig turned out of the Land Office, was the father-in-law of Captain David Hunter who had once humiliated Long John with a brace of empty pistols. In the end the new Tyler appointees did not continue under Polk, and there was little to show for Wentworth's efforts except resentment among his congressional colleagues, and a renewal of his feud with the *State Register*.¹⁰

Alarmed at the tempest he had stirred up, Wentworth hastened to make his peace with the affronted senators, James Semple and Sidney Breese. And when a heated contest for the Chicago postmastership developed, he discreetly avoided the open endorsement of any single aspirant. Writing home to the *Democrat*, he urged the men of his party to stop abusing one another over patronage and to recognize that for every appointment there must be, on the average, nineteen disappointments.¹¹

The mad scramble for political spoils, which in time would cripple so seriously the presidential leadership of James K. Polk, had already begun, and it limited severely the usefulness of Congress in those closing months of the Tyler administration. Most of Wentworth's efforts in behalf of his own constituents were a waste of energy. A renewed attempt to obtain an additional land grant for the Illinois and Michigan Canal got nowhere. A bill designed to help rescue Illinois from her financial difficulties by permitting her to tax federal lands immediately after their sale (instead of waiting five years, as required by the law in force) was unsuccessful in the House after passing the Senate. Even a modest rivers-and-harbors bill was this time pocket-vetoed by the president. About the only enactment of direct benefit to the voters who had elected Wentworth was an overdue reduction in postal charges.¹²

Yet all was not frustration and stalemate during the session, for in one single enactment, the Twenty-eighth Congress set the stage of history for the events of the next two decades. Before the hour of adjournment arrived, it had voted to annex Texas.

First, of course, the House had to deal once more with the question of antislavery petitions, and this time, with surprisingly little excitement, the gag rule was eliminated, Wentworth

reversing himself to vote with the majority. "Nothing of the kind will ever be adopted again since the Whigs and abolitionists have made so much capital out of it," he scornfully explained. But for the most venerable figure in the House it was a great personal triumph. "Blessed, forever blessed, be the name of God!" exulted John Quincy Adams.¹³

The Southerners in Congress may have submitted so tamely to repeal of the gag rule because they had a more important battle to fight. They wanted Texas, and Tyler was determined to win the credit for achieving annexation. In his last annual message to Congress, the president pointed to the results of the recent election and renewed his suggestion that the deed be accomplished by joint resolution. Although there was much debate on the subject, and strong opposition from the Whigs, the appropriate resolution was approved by the House on January 25, 1845. But then amendments in the Senate brought it back to undergo another round of bitter assaults in the lower house before it finally passed on March 1. Tyler immediately affixed his signature, and the Texas question was settled at last, although legislation admitting the republic to statehood was delayed until the following December.¹⁴

Voting enthusiastically for both annexation and admission, Wentworth voiced the hope that the flood of abolitionist petitions against Texas would now subside. In a sarcastic letter to the *Democrat*, he advised "all the boys and girls, and old maids and old women, and demagogue priests, who have any such protests in their hands, to erase the name of Texas and substitute that of California. For Texas is already a state of the Union, and the next question will, probably, be on the annexation of California. After that they may get up their protests against Cuba."¹⁵

The annexation of Texas was the climax of the session, indeed, of Tyler's entire presidential term, but to Wentworth, the Oregon question was more important. Along with other impatient expansionists, he watched uneasily the negotiations in progress between Secretary of State Calhoun and the British minister, Richard Pakenham. In the past, Calhoun had favored a policy of watchful passivity on the Oregon controversy, believing that the steady influx of American pioneers would prove more effective than insolent threats, and that a war with Great Britain would desolate the Southern economy. It was

strongly suspected that he had little hope of getting any territory north of the forty-ninth parallel.

Exasperated by the administration's leisurely approach to the problem, certain extremists in Congress decided to force the issue. Their first step in the House was a bill to establish a territorial government in Oregon. To the more cautious members, such action seemed hasty and dangerous, but supporters of the measure insisted that it was necessary immediately for the protection of Americans on the Pacific Coast. Wentworth agreed. In a fiery speech on January 27, he implored Southerners to demonstrate their patriotism, now that Texas was secure, by "advocating all measures for re-possessing Oregon."

Unlike Calhoun, Long John was convinced that delay favored the British. Negotiation, he declared, was "mere British legerdemain to swindle us out of the country." And what of the fear that bold action would lead to war? He doubted whether that "nation of hypocrites" possessed the courage to fight for Oregon, but if it should be so foolhardy, "our indignant citizens would pour upon Canada from Maine to Michigan, and overrun the country like a tornado."

Drawing upon the familiar platitudes of manifest destiny, Wentworth climaxed his passionate address with a plea that the area of freedom be continuously enlarged, and never diminished. Soon, he said, the representatives of Texas would be sitting in Congress, and he looked forward to the day when men from Oregon would join them. And before long they must make room for others from Nova Scotia and Canada, from Cuba and Mexico, even from Patagonia! He did not believe that "the God of Heaven, when he crowned the American arms with success, designed that the original States should be the only abode of liberty on earth. On the contrary, he only designed them as the great centre from which civilization, religion, and liberty should radiate and radiate until the whole continent should bask in their blessings."¹⁶

The Oregon territorial bill passed the House easily, but not before it had been amended to include a notice abrogating the treaty of joint occupation. Wentworth strongly desired the termination of the Anglo-American agreement, but he voted against the amendment because he suspected that it was a Whig trick to unite the enemies of both measures. His fears seemed fully justified when the bill failed in the Senate by a two-vote margin. "Thus we lost united what we could have

passed separate," he lamented. Aggressive action on the Oregon problem had been blocked for the time being—but by partisan, more than by sectional, opposition. Listening from the inaugural platform on March 4, as the new President asserted America's "clear and unquestionable" claim to Oregon, the impatient young politician from Illinois had good reason to hope that the next Congress, safely Democratic in both houses, would defy British rapacity and establish the northwestern boundary of the United States at fifty-four degrees and forty minutes north latitude.¹⁷

By that quaint constitutional custom which survived into the twentieth century, Congress dispersed immediately after the inauguration of James Polk, and all lawmaking was suspended during the first nine months of his administration. For Wentworth it was the first real vacation since he had entered Congress, and he spent most of his time at Troy, where a son was born to Marie in August. But as autumn approached, he turned his attention to Chicago and the *Democrat*, which was steadily losing ground to its more progressive competitors.

Before traveling westward in September, by way of Lake Champlain and Montreal, he bought enough new equipment and supplies to modernize his printing office. His most important acquisition was an Adams press of the largest kind. When powered by steam, it would turn out a maximum of one thousand sheets an hour, far more than any other press in the city.¹⁸ For a few years this would give him a great technical advantage over his rivals, but in the long run the purchase would prove to be somewhat unfortunate. The Adams was the last and best of the "bed and platen" flat presses used for newspaper printing. Robert Hoe was already at work developing his rotary-type press, which would soon bring a technological revolution to the newspaper industry. Like the owners of New England clipper ships a few years later, Wentworth invested heavily in the most highly perfected version of an already obsolescent instrument. The *Democrat* might outstrip all competitors in the 1840's, but during the following decade it would be outclassed in turn by newspapers which had adopted the new Hoe press.¹⁹

Unaware of this miscalculation, Long John jauntily christened his giant press the "Oregon," and prepared to re-enter the field of daily publication, having left it to the Whigs for four years. The Chicago *Daily Democrat*, which began to ap-

pear in the fall of 1845, was mainly for city distribution. In surrounding rural areas the weekly edition continued to be the favorite. The telegraphic link with the East Coast, which would provide the greatest stimulus for daily newspapers, was still two years away for Chicago, although by the winter of 1846 a line had been stretched as far west as Michigan City, only a few miles distant. When President Polk delivered his annual message to Congress in December of that year, both the *Democrat* and the *Journal* promised to be first on the streets with its text. The result was a spirited stagecoach race from the telegraph station to Chicago, with each newspaper claiming victory and accusing the other of unsportsmanlike behavior.²⁰

Once the modernization and expansion of the *Democrat* was completed, Wentworth renewed his ambition to house it in his own building. He bought a lot on LaSalle Street, between Lake and Randolph, and drew up plans for a four-story structure that would contain offices, pressrooms, sleeping quarters for himself, and the usual "reading room" where the party faithful could gather to peruse exchange newspapers. It was built in 1847, at a total cost of about four thousand dollars, and he named it "Jackson Hall."²¹

These improvements in the physical plant were accompanied by a rousing drive for new subscribers in which Long John exploited every advantage that his political eminence would yield him. He had long since discovered that the two positions of editor and congressman strongly reinforced each other. To a political leader, priceless benefits inevitably accrued from owning a newspaper in which he could express his views, defend his actions, and denounce his enemies. On the other hand, the *Democrat* profited abundantly from the publication of Wentworth's regular letters from Washington, because readers relished the opportunity to get the "inside" story of congressional activities.

But the advantages to the newspaper went far beyond that. Even during the Tyler administration, Wentworth had exercised much control over the post offices in his district. With the inauguration of Polk, the change to Democratic postmasters was energetically begun, and Long John supervised the operation in his district with a jealous eye. At Springfield the *Sangamo Journal* complained bitterly, in the summer of 1845, that Wentworth's thirst for "vengeance" was insatiable, and that he

was still "indulging in that fiendish work—proscribing men for political purposes—for which he is so justly celebrated." ²²

From the postmasters whose appointments he had secured, the editor of the *Democrat* expected certain return favors which were later described by a rival newspaper in the following manner:

Mr. Wentworth has had the appointing of Postmasters hereabouts for a great many years, and he has uniformly used the power so as to increase the circulation of his paper. No man could be Postmaster in his bailiwick who would not perform the drudgery of an active agency for the *Chicago Democrat*, or who would use any exertion to secure subscribers for another Chicago paper. ²³

Another result of Wentworth's political influence was the regular selection of the *Democrat* as the official "corporation" newspaper for the city of Chicago. And in 1845, it was one of three papers in Illinois to which the Polk administration awarded the advertising of mail contracts. The fact that no such federal plum was granted to the *State Register* did not improve the relations between Wentworth and Walters. The *Register* commented in sarcastic detail upon "The Advantage of a Printer Being a Member of Congress," and then broadened its attack to denounce Long John's entire legislative record as treacherous to the interests of Illinois. For such a villain, Walters exclaimed, "there should be placed in every honest hand, a whip, to lash the rascal naked round the world!" The *Democrat* was neither slow nor temperate in its response, and other editors jumped in to fight once more the old intra-party battle between Springfield and Chicago. ²⁴

Illinois was not the only spot in the country where Democrats were pummeling one another. The hope was vanishing that Polk's election would heal the divisions in the party and restore some semblance of the old Jacksonian unity. In New York the feud between "Barnburners" and "Hunkers" had become more venomous than ever, and the president's honest efforts to avoid favoring either faction had only brought him ungracious reproaches from both sides. Particularly galling to many Van Buren men was Polk's choice of an official organ for his administration. Ignoring advice from the Hermitage, he turned his back upon Blair and the *Globe* to install Thomas Ritchie of Virginia as editor of the *Washington Union*. This

move was pleasing to most Southerners, and yet the Calhoun Democrats were no less disgruntled than the other wings of the party, since their favorite had not been invited to continue as secretary of state. And behind the factional quarrels over distribution of the patronage and thorny problems like internal improvements and Western lands, there loomed ever more ominously the sectional issue of slavery. This explosive question was relentlessly forcing the Democratic party to choices which it had tried to avoid during twelve years under Jackson and Van Buren.

The hour was too critical for such divided councils within the party which must direct the destinies of the republic. In Washington the atmosphere fairly crackled with tension as the Twenty-ninth Congress assembled in December of 1845. Mexico had already broken diplomatic relations over the annexation of Texas, and John Slidell was on his way to Mexico City in a final quest for an amicable settlement. At the same time General Zachary Taylor held half of the American army along the Nueces River, prepared to move farther south upon orders from Washington. Meanwhile, relations with Great Britain remained tense as the Oregon sore continued to fester without effective treatment. The imminent possibility of two simultaneous foreign wars sobered the more responsible political leaders.

For John Wentworth, now entering upon his second term in Congress, Oregon took precedence over all other issues, and internal improvements came second. He professed to be highly optimistic on both subjects. Was not the Democratic party still officially committed to the doctrine that all Oregon belonged to the United States? And had not a recent convention of Southerners at Memphis endorsed rivers-and-harbors improvements by the federal government? Actually, of course, the outlook for each of the two causes was less hopeful than he assumed. Administration policy on Oregon was far from clear-cut, and the president was known to entertain serious doubts about the constitutionality of extensive internal improvement programs.

During the negotiations with Great Britain in the summer of 1845, Polk had retreated from the maximum American claim in the Northwest to renew the proposal of earlier presidents for a compromise at the forty-ninth parallel. But the British minister to Washington had curtly rejected the offer, and the president had ordered Secretary Buchanan to withdraw it im-

mediately. In his first annual message to Congress, Polk now returned to the position that American rights extended all the way to the southern boundary of Alaska. And he recommended that London be given the year's notice required for terminating joint occupation. Unyielding expansionists like Wentworth greeted the message with great enthusiasm, and the stirring phrase, "54° 40' or fight," echoed across the country. But many moderates in Congress were also in favor of giving notice, because they believed that a more aggressive attitude might impel the British to reconsider their hasty rejection of the American compromise offer.

Wentworth classed all advocates of compromise with "traitors and tories," and he was equally annoyed by those who advised a policy of procrastination. "I should like to see members, on this question, served like jurors," he wrote, "and not allowed to eat, or drink, or sleep, until they come to some determination." During the long debate in the House on ending joint occupation, he again declared that Oregon ought to have the firm support of all congressmen who had wanted the annexation of Texas. He warned that Northern Democrats in particular would suffer before the public if they were forced to accept the surrender of five degrees and forty minutes of free territory, after voting to add a great slaveholders' domain to the republic. Already, there were predictions that the South, "having used the West to get Texas, would now abandon it, and go against Oregon."²⁵

Did Wentworth mean to claim, demanded William L. Yancey of Alabama, that some kind of bargain had been struck between the two sections? Long John shook his head. He had said nothing about a bargain. And he was not criticizing the South, only exhorting it to "come up and meet the Oregon question fully and frankly, and so belie the charge that it would not as quick extend the area of freedom on the North as the South."²⁶

The notice of termination was finally approved in the House on February 9, 1846, but by then the tide was once more running strongly toward compromise. This was clearly demonstrated earlier the same day when a resolution declaring the Oregon question to be "no longer a subject of negotiation" was treated as a joke by the House. Only a handful of die-hards—the New York *Globe* named them the "Immortal Ten"—braved the mock cheers and applause of their colleagues to

march past the affirmative tellers. Wentworth was one of them.²⁷

Early in 1846 certain commercial developments were beginning to affect the tone of the Oregon discussions. Reduction of American import duties in the proposed Walker Tariff would soon offer an expanded market for British manufactures, while the imminent repeal of England's historic Corn Laws promised a new era of prosperity to the grain-glutted states of the Northwest. In an atmosphere consequently more cordial, London now offered to discuss a settlement at forty-nine degrees. Polk discreetly consulted the Senate first, and then entered upon those negotiations which ended in a treaty signed on June 15.

Long before that date, Wentworth had recognized that the partition of Oregon was inevitable. He admitted in April that a full two thirds of Congress favored compromise with Great Britain. But resignation was not acquiescence, and he remained to the end a stubborn champion of 54° 40'. While avoiding any strong censure of the president, he could not conceal his resentment toward Southern leaders in Congress. By sacrificing part of Oregon after getting Texas, they were, he declared, "opening the eyes of the North."²⁸

As war with Mexico approached, Long John's anger mounted. "Why should we not compromise our difficulties with Mexico as well as with Great Britain?" he demanded. "The same doctrine that our Southern friends preach about surrendering Oregon to the 49th would apply to surrendering of all Texas to the Nueces. If it is wicked to go to war with England for disputed territory, it is not only wicked but cowardly to go to war with Mexico for the same reason."²⁹

Yet when troops clashed along the Rio Grande, and war was declared on May 13, Wentworth promptly gave the administration his emphatic support. He was still too much the party man to join the Whigs in opposition, and too much the expansionist to shrink from an opportunity to acquire California. Relying upon the short memory of its readers, the *Democrat* even proclaimed in June that persons who said the army had no business moving to the Rio Grande should be regarded as traitors.³⁰ But as the victorious American troops marched ever deeper into Mexico during the next two years, and new annexations in the Southwest became increasingly probable, the conviction hardened in Long John's mind that his

section of the United States had been cheated in the Oregon settlement.

While diplomacy and war occupied much of the public's attention in 1846, important domestic legislation was emerging from the first session of the Twenty-ninth Congress. The administration's revision of tariff policy, planned by Secretary of the Treasury Robert Walker, received Wentworth's hearty approval, although the illness and eventual death of his infant son in Troy prevented his attendance at the final vote. Favoring the repudiation of the protective principle, and the substitution of ad valorem for specific duties, he had objected only to the proposed taxes on coffee, tea, and salt. Congress largely obliged by shifting tea and coffee to the free list before final passage of the bill.³¹

Another of Polk's campaign promises was kept when Congress re-established the Van Buren subtreasury system, thereby dispelling the fear of a revived central bank which had haunted Wentworth and other Loco-foco Democrats. For the benefit of his own district, Long John could point to the success during this session of the Chicago port-of-entry bill, and to legislation inaugurating a bonded warehouse program, which he had introduced in the House.³²

Altogether, Long John saw the triumph in 1846 of so many causes for which he had fought, that he might well have looked upon it as a year of achievement, rather than frustration. Except for Oregon—and internal improvements!

The Whigs had often posed as the only true friends of river-and-harbor appropriations, and Wentworth was anxious to disprove their claim by action, rather than by argument. The Memphis Convention in November of 1845 had sent his hopes soaring. Dominated by John Calhoun, who was once more groping toward a South-West alliance which would prevent the permanent isolation of his section, the convention had endorsed federal aid for the removal of obstructions in Western waters. Although it met with widespread hostility in Calhoun's own state, the Memphis doctrine was subsequently implemented in a modest Senate bill which emphasized Western rivers and slighted lake harbors. To Southerners of the Calhoun school this made political sense. Only the most reasonable measure seemed likely to secure the signature of a dubious president, and the abolitionist-infested Great Lakes regions were beyond Southern courtship anyhow.

But the House of Representatives was not to be satisfied by such a meager program. The Committee on Commerce, to which Wentworth had been transferred, reported its own bill, with appropriations totaling more than a million dollars. For the Mississippi and four of its tributaries, the sum of \$400,000 was allotted. Maritime and lake harbors were treated with equal generosity. Chicagoans, to be sure, protested that \$12,000 was insufficient for their needs, but Racine was awarded \$15,000; Little Fort (Waukegan), \$12,000; Milwaukee, \$20,000; and Michigan City, \$40,000. The proper strategy, Long John explained, was to initiate as many projects as possible, even though the appropriations in many cases would be inadequate. Then more money could be extracted from later Congresses by arguing that it would be wasteful to leave such works unfinished. But indiscreet friends at home, he warned, were talking too much and giving the "game away."³³

On the House floor Wentworth was vigilant and tireless in guiding the measure toward final passage. More troublesome than the hostility of strict constructionists were the efforts of overzealous friends to load the bill with extravagant additions. But the House brushed aside most amendments and gave its final approval on March 20, by a vote of 109 to 90. Long John reported that no one from South Carolina, and only eighteen congressmen from the entire South, had favored the bill. "So much for the Memphis Convention," was his wry comment. He noted also that the attempt to drive a wedge between lake and river interests was partially succeeding in Illinois. John A. McClernand and Orlando B. Ficklin, from southern districts in the state, had cast negative votes and the *State Register* had praised them for it.³⁴

Most newspapers in the Northwest applauded the bill, however, and Wentworth received much acclaim for his role in getting it through the lower house. One visitor in Washington, who watched the proceedings from the gallery, was the Whig mayor of Alton, Illinois. In a letter written for publication, he said: "All who know me, are well aware that I have no partiality . . . for Mr. Wentworth. But having been an attentive and impartial observer of the entire progress of this measure through the House of Representatives, I have no hesitation in saying, he has accomplished more in its passage than any one single individual in Congress."³⁵

Submitted to the other house, the bill was ignored for sev-

eral months, as more urgent problems demanded consideration. And then, when the senators did finally turn their attention to rivers-and-harbors legislation, they preferred to pass their own version. It was a partial duplication of the House measure, particularly in appropriations for the Mississippi and its tributaries. By July, therefore, each chamber had the other's bill to consider.

In the House, many fervent advocates of internal improvements were afraid that the chances of their own more generous enactment would be smothered if they approved the Senate's bill. So they joined with the enemies of all such legislation to kill it by a vote of 120 to 48. Wentworth, representing the only lake district in Illinois, was the only member from his state to vote with the majority.³⁶

With its own measure defeated, the Senate at last decided to consider the one from the House. Long John haunted the Senate lobby during the debates, and at one point persuaded Daniel Webster to defend the appropriation for Little Fort. On July 24, with Southern senators offering most of the opposition, the bill was passed, 34 to 16. The fate of river-and-harbor improvements now rested with President Polk.³⁷

For ten days the measure lay upon the White House desk. Rumors about the president's attitude were not encouraging, and Wentworth must have recalled many times the warning which Polk had personally given him earlier in the year that even one objectionable item in the list of appropriations would necessitate a veto. On August 3, the blow fell. Polk returned the bill without his signature, criticizing it as both unconstitutional and indefensibly extravagant at a time when war expenditures were mounting.³⁸

"The deed we feared, has been performed," Long John wrote the following day. "The River and Harbor Bill is *vetoed*—yes, vetoed by a democratic Executive! I say it in sorrow more than anger, but who is there in the west that will not feel aggrieved and mortified?" When government officials immediately began to auction off equipment used in work on the Chicago harbor, the *Democrat* charged that the city had been placed under a special ban by the administration. "Good Bye, Harbors! The Constitution Safe!" ran one sardonic headline. Wentworth led the fight to override the veto in the House, but the favorable vote of 96 to 91 was far short of the necessary two thirds. Rivers-and-harbors appropriations were dead for

the session, and perhaps for the duration of Polk's presidential term.³⁹

In the midst of these events, midterm elections were beginning to take place throughout the country, and with adjournment of Congress now unlikely to occur before the middle of August, Wentworth was one of many members who were forced to conduct their campaigns from Washington. A trend toward the Whigs was apparent in the early contests, but for Long John, securing his party's nomination seemed to present again the most serious obstacle. His old quarrel with Springfield Democrats handicapped him, and the doctrine of rotation in office, which he had once espoused, was now used against him. "We all have our day of trial," he wrote, "& it appears that I am having mine now."⁴⁰

The most irritating opposition came from the *Little Fort Porcupine* in Lake County, nominally a Democratic newspaper. In a series of scurrilous articles which were reprinted with great delight by the *Chicago Journal* and other unfriendly papers, the *Porcupine* raked Long John's personal character and political record from every possible angle. Its most damaging accusation was that Wentworth had bought two tracts of land on suspiciously generous terms from the Scottish banker George Smith, and that, in return, he had connived to obtain special favors from the federal government for Smith's Wisconsin Marine and Fire Insurance Company. The available evidence indicates that the purchase was a legitimate business transaction, and not a bribe for political services. But for a man who had invariably posed as an enemy of all banks, the charge was extremely embarrassing, and the *Democrat* devoted many columns to answering it.⁴¹

In spite of all his apprehensions, however, the election proved to be a great personal triumph. The Democrats of Cook County endorsed him. The congressional convention nominated him. The *State Register* condescended to support him. And the people of his district elected him, with a record total of 12,026 votes to 6,168 for his Whig opponent. In percentage of the entire vote, the Democrats had held their ground with 55 per cent, while the Whigs had declined to 28 per cent. The Liberty party, giving Owen Lovejoy 3,531 votes, had almost doubled its total in two years, and now represented 16 per cent of the district's electorate.⁴²

No politician in possession of his senses could have ignored

this continued surge of abolitionist strength among his constituents. Long John had already reversed himself on the gag rule—had even brazenly denied ever having supported it. But to the antislavery forces he was still an enemy more than a friend, for “slave-ridden Texas” had been annexed with his help, and the “slaveholders’ war” in Mexico was receiving his hearty applause. Now, however, in the last hours before adjournment, Wentworth was suddenly presented with a chance to make some amends: he could vote for the Wilmot Proviso.

By an ironic coincidence, Long John’s striking victory at the polls occurred on August 3, the same day that his arduous efforts for rivers-and-harbors legislation were frustrated by the president’s veto. And it was just five days later that David Wilmot, Democrat from Pennsylvania, attached to a special appropriation bill his famous amendment providing that no slavery should be permitted to exist in any territory that might be acquired from Mexico. The amendment was accepted by the House, but not the Senate, where it was still under consideration when the appointed time for adjournment arrived.⁴³

Wentworth was the only Democrat from Illinois to vote for the Wilmot Proviso when it was first introduced during the August heat of 1846. This display of independence must always be viewed against the background of rising antislavery sentiment in his own district, which the recent election had so forcefully verified. With his New England origins, he harbored no sympathy for slavery. As early as 1841, he had publicly revealed an intense dislike for Southern society, where “the dirk and bowie knife” were “more in vogue.” To be sure, he had usually repressed such feelings in the interest of party unity, and he was equally repelled by the noisy abolitionists, who remained, in his opinion, “lying” and “felonious” enemies of the republic.⁴⁴

But the Proviso was not abolitionism. There was nothing felonious about it. Stemming straight from Jefferson and the Northwest Ordinance, it was a highly respectable doctrine and one that was bound to attract the support of great numbers in the North. If the Whigs were allowed to exploit this issue as they had the gag rule, they might cement that alliance with the antislavery forces which Long John feared. In making the first move to prohibit the extension of slavery, the Wilmot Democrats, he believed, were forestalling such a maneuver by the opposition, and starting a backfire which might rescue their

party from lasting obloquy and defeat as the bulwark of human servitude.

There was more to John Wentworth's support of the Proviso, however, than a reflection of growing antislavery strength in northern Illinois. It was the beginning for him of an indignant revolt, obliquely against the Polk administration, but primarily against the political power of the South. The Southerners, he felt, had proved selfish and treacherous. After getting Texas and their coveted revenue tariff, they had turned their backs upon Oregon and internal improvements. And now they expected to profit further, from new territory to be won from Mexico.

These were the same Southerners who more than once had treated him with contempt in the House of Representatives, criticizing the form of his Latin quotations, making fun of his ungainly height, sneering at his rough manners and good-natured clowning. These were the men who had "betrayed" Van Buren and the Northern Democrats at Baltimore in 1844. It was not so much slavery that Wentworth was coming to hate as it was Southerners. But slavery was their tender spot, and the Proviso would prick it painfully. At the same time, it would present the free states all benefits that might flow from the war with Mexico.

Wentworth's vote for the Wilmot Proviso sprang from a mixture of impulses which even he could hardly have explained. Nor were they identical with the motives of other Democrats who supported it. Wilmot himself, for example, was no fifty-four-forty man and had strongly opposed the rivers-and-harbors bill. Political expediency and the desire to avenge real or imagined injuries mingled in widely varying proportions with the noblest idealism to motivate the actions of the men who sponsored the historic blow against slavery. No single, sweeping statement can accurately explain why they did it. And certainly no member of the group could have dreamed that in the Wilmot Proviso he had helped construct the platform on which would rise the next major political party in the United States.

CHAPTER V

The Free-Soil Dilemma

Perhaps no man in Congress more deserves to be called a sincere and earnest reformer, than the Hon. John Wentworth, from Illinois.—NEW YORK GLOBE, *quoted in* WEEKLY CHICAGO DEMOCRAT, *May 16, 1848.*

THEY WERE weary congressmen who found themselves at last released by adjournment on August 10, 1846. It had been a long and strenuous session. The flurry of excitement at the end over the Wilmot Proviso had been no more than a post-script to eight months of unrelenting tension for these men who had declared war upon one foreign power and settled a serious disagreement with another, while enacting domestic legislation of far-reaching importance to the country. Well before Christmas Day should arrive, moreover, they must be back in their seats, ready to face the tasks which they had left unfinished.

Wentworth may have been tempted to forego his customary trip back to Illinois in favor of resting at Troy, but he could not with serenity prolong further his absence from Chicago. Although the election was over and he was now safely returned to Congress until March of 1849, he wanted to learn at first-hand how the people of his district were reacting to the issues that had arisen and the decisions that had been made in this eventful year. Also, the rapid growth of his constituency pre-

sented a constant challenge. Chicago alone now approached a population of fifteen thousand, and by 1850 that figure would be doubled. In the three years since his first election to Congress, the number of voters in his district had increased by 50 per cent. When a man left such a region for the better part of a year, he returned to find many strangers walking the city streets and turning the sod out on the prairie. And Long John's political mastery had always been anchored upon a broad and intimate acquaintance with the people.

So he set out upon another tour of the counties, to shake hands with old friends and new settlers, and to listen and learn, rather than campaign. Those who had known him from his earliest visits could detect some changes in his appearance. No longer a stripling, his frame was beginning to fill out, and the added flesh on his cheeks somewhat softened the lines of jutting squareness in his jaw. Closer scrutiny might even have revealed some slight evidence that his hair was beginning to thin. But the general impression was still one of youthfulness. Too much so, almost, for a veteran politician. Perhaps a beard would lend him dignity. He might try one, anyhow.¹

In his travels, Wentworth found popular attention focused upon military operations in Mexico, where General Taylor was completing the first phase of an American offensive with his capture of Monterrey. Illinois had responded eagerly to the call for troops, and many a father, with letters to show from a soldier son, wanted to rehearse in detail the movements of Hardin's regiment, or some other, and speculate upon coming developments in the conflict. But related subjects inevitably crept into these long-winded discussions of battle strategy, and Long John listened to some pungent comments upon the administration's diplomatic retreat from 54° 40', and Southern aspirations to carve new slave territory out of Mexico. He returned to Chicago late in October, strengthened in the conviction that his recent course of political action, however much it might deviate from that of other Democratic congressmen in the state, was an accurate reflection of the majority will in his own district.

Neither his section, nor his party, Wentworth believed, could profit from further co-operation with the South. Recent sessions of Congress had made it brutally clear that the Western states must turn elsewhere for help in getting internal improvements and a more liberal public land policy. The only

hope that he saw for the Democratic party was in a return to the leadership of men like Martin Van Buren and Silas Wright. Repugnance for slavery was spreading in the North, which, through its more rapid population growth, was certain to play an ever more commanding role in politics. If the Whigs were not to be handed control of this dominant section, the Democratic party, in Wentworth's opinion, must shift its center of gravity northward by throwing off the yoke of Southern dictation and courting the allegiance of all but the most radical wing of the antislavery forces. Such strategy would not only confound the Whigs, but lead the party of Jefferson and Jackson back toward the principles of its founders.²

By its unflinching support of the Wilmot Proviso, the Chicago *Democrat* soon became one of the leading free-soil newspapers of the Northwest. In 1847, Wentworth hired young Joseph K. C. Forrest, whose views dangerously approached abolitionism, and gave him the specific assignment of writing the antislavery editorials for the paper.³ But among the Democrats who had elected him to Congress, there were many still unperturbed by the slavery issue. To hold their loyalty, Long John continued to proclaim the old Locofoco principles on banking, monopoly, and public lands.

Unrelenting in its war upon paper money and the institutions that issued it, the *Democrat* was one of the journals most responsible for the narrow restrictions upon banking activities written into the new state constitution of 1847. It exploited the prejudices of rural subscribers by picturing bankers—indeed, all businessmen, upon occasion—as parasites and robbers. Cities themselves, the paper declared, were but Whig creations, where the speculative classes conspired to enrich themselves at the expense of the countryside. In the autumn of 1846, when a group of Chicago grain traders combined to drive down the price of wheat, the *Democrat* was presented with its most useful illustration of mercantile wickedness. It also found a popular target in steamboat combinations, and it sedulously fomented the anger of farmers at receiving payment for their products in depreciated paper currency.⁴

To the editor of the *Commercial Advertiser*, Alfred Dutch, self-appointed spokesman for business enterprise in Chicago, Wentworth's voice was a trumpet call to class warfare. The "tall, brainless, covetous, sordid wretch of Jackson Hall" was inciting the working classes to commit arson and murder,

Dutch thundered, and all for the sake of selling a few more subscriptions to the *Democrat*! "Farmers who have one particle of sense ought to keep his paper from their children," he warned, "unless they desire them to despise and hate all on whom they are dependent for sales." ⁵

There was still another form of monopoly which the *Democrat* assailed, and in this case, with fewer reprisals. The deadliest evil in American society, it declared, was the trend toward monopoly of the soil. In John Wentworth the nationwide movement for land reform had found one of its most spirited advocates. The columns of his newspaper brimmed with warnings that the concentration of land in the hands of speculators was inimical to democratic institutions, and that its prolonged retention by the federal government was a barrier to progress. "What are the public lands in many parts of this State worth but to give away to those who will cultivate them?" it demanded. The appeal was humanitarian, and deeply emotional:

A billion of acres of unsold land
Are lying in grievous dearth;
And millions of men in the image of God,
Are starving all over the earth;
Oh! tell me, ye sons of America,
How much men's souls are worth.⁶

Homesteads for free men, circumscription of slavery, annihilation of banks and other monopolies—these were the doctrines that were earning Wentworth wide renown as a radical reformer midway in the nineteenth century.

From his round of visits among the people back home, Long John brought to Washington, in December of 1846, a spirit of restless dissatisfaction which the proceedings of Congress did not subdue. Another rivers-and-harbors bill made its tortuous way through House and Senate, but with little hope of anything better from Polk than the pocket veto which it eventually received. The Wilmot Proviso was again attached to a special appropriation bill in the lower house, but the Senate struck it out, and on the last day of the session, with Wentworth in stubborn opposition, the House acquiesced. An attempt to organize the Territory of Oregon was frustrated in the Senate, partly because Southerners objected to a provision which forbade slavery without referring to the fact that the region was north of the Missouri Compromise line.⁷

These were all major disappointments for Long John, but it was on the more trivial subject of coffee and tea that his wrath bubbled over. In his annual message to Congress, the president pointed to the growing wartime deficit and suggested "a revenue duty on the principal articles now embraced in the free list." His meaning was clear. The most taxable items on the free list were tea and coffee, and they had been placed there the previous session to placate a clamorous group which included John Wentworth.

Although the recommendation was hardly unusual in a period of emergency, Wentworth sourly viewed it as one more indignity heaped upon his section. Southerners, who did not waste such luxuries upon their slaves, would pay only a small fraction of this tax, he complained. But poor Northern farmers and laboring men would be burdened with a higher price upon one of the few comforts in their daily routine. Were not the poor people of the land already pouring out their blood in Mexico? Why should they also "pay more in money than John Jacob Astor?" The year before, in order to assure passage of its tariff bill, the administration had assented to free coffee and tea. Now it proposed to tax them. What was this but another version of the Texas-Oregon swindle, another Southern scheme for the "plunder of the North?"⁸

Without waiting for the president's request to be embodied in a revenue bill, Long John took the offensive. On January 2, 1847, he offered defiance to James Polk in a resolution: "That it is inexpedient to lay any duty on tea and coffee." To resolve is not to legislate, and few congressmen were willing to be recorded on the unpopular side in a mere expression of opinion. The House therefore gave its emphatic approval to Wentworth's manifesto by a vote of 115 to 48.⁹

In spite of this rebuke administration leaders made several attempts during the session to levy an import duty on tea and coffee, but each time they were beaten back. After one of these defeats, Polk wrote in his diary: "The whole Federal [Whig] party united with Mr. Wentworth & others and voted it down."¹⁰

For his mutinous behavior, Long John was soon made to feel the full weight of administration displeasure in its official organ, the *Washington Union*. On February 3, the day after he had delivered a long speech defending his opposition to the proposed tax in phrases that crackled with indignation, the

Union invited the attention of its readers to his "pitiful apology" for deserting "his party and his duty." It accused him of appealing to "the narrowest and meanest forms of sectional prejudice," and of parading himself as both an apostate and a fool. Then it concluded with these contemptuous words: "His speech at least explained one point very clearly. It showed fully the reasons why he has failed to acquire the slightest consideration in the House."¹¹

Wentworth responded immediately the next morning with a savage denunciation of Thomas Ritchie, the editor of the *Union*. Ritchie pursued his attacks, and Representative Stephen Douglas came to the aid of his colleague with a demand that the *Union's* reporters be barred from the House. Congressmen actually consumed the better part of a day in turbulent discussion of the unfriendly relations between John Wentworth and the Washington *Union*. It was Long John himself who reminded members that tea had once before been an explosive issue in American history.¹²

"I see Long John has got himself into a fight with the administration," wrote Governor Thomas Ford of Illinois to a friend on February 14. "I am waiting to see whether he will stand up to his position or whip in. I think it most likely that he will whip in."¹³ But far from whipping in, Wentworth was already preparing to take part in a much more elaborate demonstration against Polk: the Chicago River-and-Harbor Convention.

Planned as early as the previous September, when the first wave of resentment at the president's veto was still rolling across the Northwest, the convention had been scheduled to meet on July 5, 1847, and Chicagoans of every political creed were joining earnestly in the preparations. Because of his wide repute as a champion of internal improvements, it was only natural that Wentworth should be named chairman of the committee on address. He arrived home from Washington on March 29, with the knowledge that a second rivers-and-harbors bill had just fallen before the veto, and quickly assembled the committee for its work. The "address" that emerged was a ringing appeal for public repudiation of Polk's narrow viewpoint, in order that further needless losses of lives and property on the inland waters might be brought to an end by federal intervention.¹⁴

In the weeks that followed, the *Democrat* devoted column

after column to promoting the convention. Everyone was welcome, it proclaimed, any man could be a delegate! By the first days of July, the stream of early arrivals had become a flood. Chicago, momentarily the center of national attention, was bursting with pride and with people. Accommodation in hotels and private homes was soon exhausted. Many visitors were forced to sleep on the vessels that had brought them. In the huge gathering were representatives from all parts of the Union—even some from the South. New York alone sent three hundred, and the Illinois army numbered over a thousand. Thurlow Weed was present, Thomas Corwin, too, and the newly elected Illinois congressman, Abraham Lincoln. Long John himself introduced Horace Greeley to the convention. Bands and parades set the stage for the sessions, which crowds of up to twenty thousand attended.

Wentworth's delight at this enthusiastic response was somewhat diminished by the conspicuous absence of leaders from his own party. Particularly disappointing was the behavior of Lewis Cass. The popular Michigan senator, who was among the favorites for the nomination to succeed Polk, had declined to attend in a crisp note which contained no words of encouragement. Van Buren and Wright, to be sure, had laid their blessings upon the meeting from a distance, and Democrats of lower rank had appeared in adequate numbers. But there was enough disparity in the convention's political composition to invite a disdainful sniff from the *Washington Union* at its strong odor of Whiggery.

In one of fifteen resolutions which they adopted, however, the delegates disavowed all attempts to connect the cause of internal improvements "with the fortunes of any political party." At the same time, they stated the constitutional justification and practical necessity for federal rivers-and-harbors appropriations in terms that left no doubt of their calculated challenge to the administration's philosophy.¹⁵

Less than two years had intervened between the Memphis Convention and its sequel in Chicago, but Calhoun's presence at the one meeting contrasted sharply with the feting of Greeley and Weed at the other to symbolize the South's declining influence among the people of the upper West. In the White House sat the man whose policies were more the occasion than the cause of a fundamental shift in political alignments which had only begun. Sincere in his desire to be a truly

national president, but slow to realize the dangerous emotional power of sectional loyalties, James Polk had a sturdy reply for enthusiasts like those who had assembled at Chicago. His pocket veto of the rivers-and-harbors bill the previous March had required no formal explanation, but he volunteered one anyhow to the new Congress which met in December of 1847. In a special message submitted during the second week of the session, he enumerated in elaborate detail his objections to the measure. He suggested, as an alternative, that internal improvements be financed from tonnage duties, levied by the states with the permission of Congress.¹⁶

Wentworth responded like a bull to the bite of a picador's lance. At the first opportunity he offered another resolution defying the president: "That the General Government has the power to construct such harbors and improve such rivers as are 'necessary and proper' for the protection of our navy and our commerce, and also for the defences of our country." It was immediately approved by a vote of 138 to 54, and Long John allegedly exclaimed, "We have now passed the bill over his head!"¹⁷

Later in the session, the House vigorously reaffirmed these sentiments and repudiated the plan for tonnage duties in a series of five resolutions which McClelland labeled "a gratuitous attack upon the Administration." But when it came to the actual appropriation of funds, members appeared loath to pursue their fruitless struggle with an implacable executive. Although a number of rivers-and-harbors bills were introduced, including one by Wentworth for the "preservation and repair" of the Chicago harbor, consideration in each case was repeatedly delayed. Not until August 11, 1848—three days before adjournment—did one of these measures finally pass. By that time, Polk was already doggedly at work upon another veto message, but his energy was wasted. The Senate found itself too busy with other problems to act upon the bill before the end of the session. For the third straight year, internal improvement legislation had met utter defeat.¹⁸

From the opening day of this same Thirtieth Congress, the problem which cried out above all others for solution was the governing of America's great new empire beyond the Rocky Mountains. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in February, 1848, added more than a half million square miles to the southwestern corner of the nation. It also brought the hour

ominously nearer when members of Congress could no longer suppress the burning issue which David Wilmot had two years earlier thrust before them.

At the moment, however, Oregon's case was the more desperate. For five years her leaders had been pleading in vain for the extension of American laws to their region. When the boundary agreement with Great Britain cleared away one serious obstacle, the disruptive subject of slavery arose to take its place. Within two years California would find herself similarly enmeshed in the web of sectional animosity.

Except for a few men like Calhoun who denied federal power to do so, most congressmen were willing to exclude slavery from Oregon. But Southerners were determined not to create a precedent for the Wilmot Proviso in consenting to the prohibition. Oregon, they insisted, was free territory because it was north of the Missouri Compromise line. In the Mexican Cession other principles must govern. Such a qualification was naturally unacceptable to the enlarged free-soil faction in Congress, and many worried Southerners began to demand that the rights of their section in the remaining territory be somehow guaranteed in any bill for the organization of Oregon.

"We are now in an awful state of excitement," Wentworth wrote in June, 1848. "A dissolution of the Union is threatened on every side. . . . Here is the *battle* ground; & it appears that, what is to be done for free principles, must be done within a few weeks. Some kind of a compromise will pass the Senate. Then comes the House, where a desperate fight will be made."¹⁹ He was determined to oppose any concession to the South which would undercut the Proviso.

Between the two extremes represented by Calhoun and Wilmot, moderate men searched anxiously for some middle ground to stand on. The Senate first accepted the plan presented by John M. Clayton of Delaware to organize three territories in a single bill. Slavery would be excluded from Oregon, but in California and New Mexico, the territorial legislatures would be stripped of all jurisdiction on the subject, and any questions that arose would be left to the territorial and higher federal courts for adjudication. Little more than a device for unloading the problem of the Wilmot Proviso upon the Supreme Court, the "Clayton Compromise" was promptly tabled in the House without serious discussion.²⁰

Next, the Senate tried to couple the Oregon bill with an

extension of the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific, but the House also rejected this combination. Finally, on the eve of adjournment, the senators grudgingly accepted a measure which simply organized the Territory of Oregon and prohibited slavery there. Polk reluctantly signed it, and the Pacific Northwest was rescued at last from its unhappy isolation. Wentworth was doubly pleased. Oregon had been set upon the road to statehood, and Congress had trampled heavily upon the doctrines of John C. Calhoun.²¹

With one possible counterpoise now removed, the problem of slavery in the domain won from Mexico stood forth more nakedly than ever as a barrier to sectional peace. Already it had become the paramount issue of the presidential campaign in progress. Lewis Cass, as a part of his bid for the Democratic nomination, had proposed still another solution in his famous "Nicholson Letter" of the previous December. From a narrow definition of congressional power, Cass argued that the status of slavery in each territory should be determined by the people who resided there. Like the compromise sponsored by Senator Clayton, this doctrine of "popular sovereignty" was less a solution to the territorial problem than a route of escape for Congress from its obligation to find one. But among Democrats it appealed to the principle of self-government, as well as to the spirit of conciliation, and no doubt contributed to its author's success at Baltimore, where he was nominated in May by the national convention.²²

Inevitably, Cass was a choice repugnant to both the Calhoun and the Van Buren faction of the disunited party. New York Barnburners in particular returned from Baltimore angrily prepared to bolt the national ticket. Soon their rebelliousness had its counterpart among antislavery Whigs, who were outraged by their party's nomination of a Southern slaveholder, Zachary Taylor. The emotional foundations for a radical third party had suddenly been laid. Only the necessary political ritual of reconnaissance, negotiation, and mutual concession among its diverse components delayed the formal appearance of the Free-Soil party until August.

The leading Barnburner of Illinois watched this gathering revolt with mingled sympathy and uneasiness. Long John was distressed by the nomination of Cass, but a third party would only multiply the difficulties of his own uncomfortable position. From the earliest weeks of the year, he had known that there

was trouble ahead. His attacks upon the Polk administration had revived the fury of opposition to him among Illinois Democrats. McClernand, who stood close to the president, was talking of reprisals in the form of post office removals throughout the fourth district. Administration Democrats in Chicago tried to turn a February mass meeting into an anti-Wentworth demonstration. David L. Gregg and Josiah McRoberts were two among many local leaders scheming to "rotate" into his congressional seat. Ebenezer Peck still nursed his grudge, and Peck's brother-in-law was now assistant editor of the *State Register*. A brief truce between the *Register* and the *Democrat* was already disappearing in an angry argument over the manner of selecting delegates to the national convention. And the mischievous Whigs of Cook County compounded Long John's woes with a solemn resolution commending his record in Congress.²³

Perhaps the time had arrived, Marie Wentworth suggested, for her husband to forsake politics and settle down to a more normal pattern of life. Riley Loomis concurred, and tempted his son-in-law with a handsome business offer, but Wentworth could not bear to retreat under fire from this exciting contest. Just one more term, he promised, and then he would retire.²⁴

"Long John's strength is evidently about breaking up," a hopeful rival had written in February. By April, however, the prospects were brighter, and one of Wentworth's friends informed Douglas that he would "certainly be renominated unless some new issue be made." The only new issue that appeared was the nomination of Cass on May 25, two weeks before the fourth district convention in Illinois. With his New York counterparts in open revolt against the ticket, what would Long John do? Abolitionists and Whigs, administration and Proviso Democrats—all waited for the answer. But the object of their curiosity remained for the moment noncommittal. The time to answer that question was *after* he had won or lost the regular party nomination.²⁵

The district convention at Ottawa opened in an uproar that never subsided. The presence of contesting delegations from three counties offered an early test of strength and set off a furious quarrel that ended with the seating of groups favorable to Long John. "I never saw such absolute rascality practiced in all my life as was by Wentworth's tools and understrappers," the disappointed McRoberts wailed. Before sufficient quiet

could be restored for balloting, the indignant minority walked out and organized its own convention. Those who remained nominated Wentworth, noisily smothered a resolution endorsing Cass, and broke up in disorder. The bolters branded Long John a renegade and named Jesse B. Thomas as their candidate. Whigs in the district took heart at the rupture and redoubled their efforts in behalf of their own nominee, J. Young Scammon.²⁶

When he received word in Washington of his stormy, and not altogether complete, victory at Ottawa, Wentworth acted promptly to clarify his position. "The idea of bolting any nomination, at any time, even the most distant, has never occurred to me," he assured Governor Augustus French. "The Chicago Democrat has supported & will support all the nominations, national, state & county." A note of injured innocence crept into his tone as he continued: "It is rather hard, after twelve years of active service, to be compelled to get certificates [of loyalty] when I have never bolted nor scratched a ticket." In similar protestations to a Chicago friend, he explained that his copies of the *Democrat* had not been reaching him, that he was unaware of Bradley's failure to support Cass, and that he "never had an idea of bolting the Presidential ticket."²⁷

There was some raising of Democratic eyebrows at this belated affirmation of party loyalty, but even the most skeptical had to admit that the *Democrat* was now speaking favorably of Lewis Cass. He was at least better than Taylor, it declared. A Northern man rather than the owner of two hundred slaves, he might not favor the Proviso, but he would never veto it. He was a Western man too, and had always fought for the welfare of his section. Above all, he had received the regular nomination of the party, and regular candidates (including those running for Congress!) should always be supported.²⁸

This was scarcely an enthusiastic endorsement, but it served to cut the ground from under the bolters in the district. Thomas withdrew from the contest in July, and the *State Register*, which had at first refused to place Wentworth's name at the head of its columns with other Democratic candidates, now sulkily repaired the omission. Only a few surly malcontents followed Peck into the camp of the Whigs.²⁹

But now the fire commenced on Long John's other flank. Leaders of the incipient Free-Soil movement, who had hoped for his assistance, were bitterly disappointed by his adherence

to Cass. Friends like Thomas Hoyne and George Manierre looked regretfully over their shoulders at him as they prepared to join the new party of protest. The *Western Citizen* concluded that his noble phrases about freedom had been merely another trick in the "game for spoils," and cursed his "miserable, contemptible, degrading huckstering in . . . sublime principles." Only hauling down the Cass flag and running up Van Buren's, it warned, would save him from complete dishonor. Meanwhile, the Whigs, both at home and in Washington, taunted him unmercifully for supporting the man who had snubbed the River-and-Harbor Convention.³⁰

Yet Long John held grimly to the course that he had set: an honest and explicit—but lukewarm—endorsement of the national ticket. By this strategy, he hoped to salvage most of the free-soil vote without alienating the regular Democrats. And he succeeded. A rumored plot by Isaac Arnold to turn the Proviso Democrats against him did not materialize. Only the Liberty party, the radical wing of the antislavery movement, placed a candidate in the field, and he was more likely to seduce Whig voters than Democrats. In the election on August 7, 1848, the Whigs carried Chicago by a narrow margin, but enough Democratic votes rolled in from the rest of the district to give Wentworth an advantage of more than 3,500 over Scammon. He had won a fourth straight term in Congress.³¹

In Buffalo two days later dissident Whigs, Barnburner Democrats, and Liberty party men united to form the Free-Soil party. The assembled hosts of reform nominated Martin Van Buren and Charles Francis Adams on a platform that embraced the Wilmot Proviso, homestead legislation, and internal improvements. Their stirring slogan, "Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men," swept across the northern part of the nation and pressed upon Long John in his precarious position at the outer edge of the Democratic party. Cass might be better than Taylor, as he had argued, but was not Van Buren superior to both? And when had he read a party platform more in harmony with his own desires?

Tempted, perhaps, but still unpersuaded, Wentworth answered the emotional Free-Soil appeal with the cold language of political realism. The practical choice in Illinois was between Taylor and Cass. Van Buren had not the slightest chance of carrying the state. A vote for him was a vote thrown to the Whigs and their ill-qualified, slaveholding candidate. "Let us

Barn Burners strive to lick Taylor first," Long John argued. Returning from the East early in September, he struggled to arrest the strong trend toward Free-Soil in his district, but he discretely abstained from any flurry of stump speeches for Cass. "You cannot drive the Van Buren men nor frighten them," he wrote to Senator Sidney Breese. "They have got to be persuaded by men in whom they have confidence."³²

One last-minute attempt at "persuasion" was a false report in the *Democrat* that Wilmot had deserted the Buffalo ticket to support Cass. But neither logic nor trickery could stem the Free-Soil tide in northeastern Illinois. The election revealed that Cook County and seven of its neighbors preferred Van Buren to either of his rivals. Chicago alone gave him over fifteen hundred votes, while favoring Cass with 1,016. Wentworth's efforts seemed a dismal failure.³³

And yet, the final totals for the entire state clearly testified to the importance of the votes salvaged for Cass in the northern districts. The Democratic nominee won in Illinois with a plurality over Taylor of only 3,099, and Long John's contribution to that narrow victory was widely acknowledged. "If John Wentworth had opposed Cass in the north," said the *Illinois Journal*, "Taylor would most unquestionably have carried the State. Whatever, therefore, the Cass men may say of Wentworth, they owe him even for the beggarly plurality they have secured for their ticket in Illinois."³⁴

In the nation as a whole, the Democrats were not so fortunate. Although Cass carried as many states as Taylor, he lost the most populous ones, and with them, the election. Van Buren's three hundred thousand supporters were so scattered that he failed to win a single electoral vote. The effect of his candidacy upon the fortunes of his two opponents was not the same everywhere; but in New York, it was probably the 120,000 ballots marked with his name that threw the state into the Whig column.

Viewing the results of the contest, Long John was confirmed in his earlier belief that the Barnburners had blundered in sponsoring a third-party revolt. And he felt no regrets at having refused to join them on their impetuous march to inevitable defeat. To many of the disappointed marchers, however, his course seemed ignoble and spineless, a dagger-thrust at the cause of freedom. The ablest historian of the Free-Soil movement takes this view:

In Illinois everything hinged upon Wentworth's course. Had Wentworth at this juncture possessed the courage to throw in his lot with the new party, the history of Free Soil in the Northwest might have been different; for his personal popularity, joined to the intense anti-slavery feeling of that region, would have insured his election to stand beside Giddings and Durkee, and might have made the counties of northern Illinois as famous as the Western Reserve.³⁵

But Long John was not a man to be charmed by lost causes, no matter how virtuous they might appear. He played always to win, and the only hope of victory—of retaining his own influence in the dispensing of patronage—had rested with Cass. Moreover, he was firmly convinced that the fight against slavery could be carried on more effectively from within the major parties.³⁶ It was folly, he maintained, for Barnburners to jump the ship of Democracy and leave it to the mercies of Southern helmsmen. Other Northern Democrats, he added, were equally foolish in their attempts to appease the South. Cass had lost the election by trying to do so. The Nicholson letter had cost him thousands of votes in the North, and still he had carried fewer slave states than Taylor.³⁷

Northern Democrats, Wentworth argued, should regain control of their party, write a platform to their own taste, and then let the Southerners choose between submission and withdrawal. "The South would not have the Nicholson letter," said the *Chicago Democrat*. "Now let us give them the Wilmot Proviso."³⁸

CHAPTER VI

A Vote Against Compromise

California has asked for admission. Admit her, and that settles the question.—*John Wentworth in the House of Representatives, July 24, 1850.*

AS A REFERENDUM upon the most urgent issue confronting American political leaders, the election of 1848 was wholly inadequate. Taylor had been the most vague of the three candidates on the subject of slavery in the territories, and his victory proved little, except, perhaps, that men who offer specific remedies for social problems antagonize more persons than they please. Nor did the end of the contest bring that period of released tension and abated rancor during which Americans so often are permitted to recuperate from the rigors of a political campaign. Nothing at all had occurred to diminish the sectional animosity which transcended the familiar party lines and ate steadily away at the foundations of national unity.

The Free-Soilers had actually aroused far more sympathy for their cause than the mere count of votes indicated, and an emotional afterglow from their spirited crusade followed many Northern statesmen back to Washington when Congress reconvened in December. In the sudden death of John Quincy Adams early in 1848, the antislavery forces had been deprived of a leader and a symbol, but they seemed almost to have preserved his craggy strength and apportioned it among them-

selves. Their mood was confident and combative, especially in their stronghold, the House of Representatives. The key to the future, they proclaimed, was the principle of free men living on free soil, and to this end the "aggressions" of the "slavocracy" must be made to cease.

But most Southerners were firmly convinced that their section was the victim, rather than the author, of aggression. Alarmed at the wide appeal of Van Buren's candidacy in the North, they foresaw an intensification of efforts to exclude them from territory bought, in part, with Southern blood; an increase of Northern connivance at the escape of valuable slaves; and a flood of abolitionist propaganda portraying the slaveholder as a bestial villain. To John Calhoun, gloomily scanning the future from his seat in the Senate chamber, the Wilmot Proviso and the underground railroad were but the preliminaries to a massive assault upon the whole structure of Southern society. It was his self-chosen mission to alert that society to its peril and unite his people in grim defense of their institutions.

Into the persisting quarrel over sectional rights in the land won from Mexico, Wentworth and other returning congressmen found a striking new factor injected. Exciting reports which had diverted some attention from the recent political campaign were now fully confirmed: gold had been discovered in California. Already some ten thousand men were feverishly at work in the treasure-laden river valleys east of San Francisco, and they were merely the advance guard of an army rushing from all over the world to join them. Washington buzzed with talk of the discovery and its possible impact upon national policy, while President Polk urged speedy congressional action to provide territorial governments for both California and New Mexico. Wentworth was doubly pleased at the news. An influx of hardy adventurers would produce conditions unfavorable to slavery in the Far West, he declared, and a new supply of bullion for the nation would strengthen the argument against paper money.¹

Congress was not slow in giving its attention to the territorial problem, but a continuation of the old stalemate was quickly promised when the House reaffirmed its adherence to the Wilmot Proviso in a resolution adopted on December 13, 1848, by a vote of 106 to 80. One week later the territorial committee reported a bill for the organization of California with all the "conditions, restrictions, and prohibitions" of the North-

west Ordinance, thereby excluding slavery without naming it.²

In the Senate, however, the search was resumed for a formula of compromise that would be acceptable to both houses, both sections, and both major parties. Stephen A. Douglas was ready the first day with a bold plan to side-step the essential issue by admitting the entire Mexican Cession immediately as a single state, with the provision that Congress might later carve additional states from the region east of the Sierra Nevada. Upon advice from the White House, Douglas agreed to narrow the boundaries of California, leaving the remaining area to be organized as the Territory of New Mexico, but his modified bill made little headway against Southern opposition.³ Other solutions were proposed and debated, other matters were attended to, and the weeks sped by with California's expanding population still living under the strange combination of American military rule, a surviving Mexican system of local government, and the extralegal regulations imposed upon themselves by men in the gold fields.

Distressing enough by itself, the controversy over slavery in the territories was aggravated by the intrusion of related problems. Texas laid belligerent claim to a boundary that stretched westward beyond Santa Fe and northward to the forty-second parallel. Southerners demanded more effective legislation for the recovery of fugitive slaves. And the outcry against the slave trade in Washington grew louder throughout the North. It was this last issue in particular—the “desecration” of the nation's capital—that excited sectional animosities during the closing months of the Polk administration.

Early in the session, both John Palfrey and Joshua Giddings offered bills aimed at the elimination of slavery itself from the District of Columbia. Wentworth not only supported these Whig abolitionists but emulated them, with a resolution that neatly tied their efforts to the Wilmot Proviso: “*Resolved: That the Committee on the Judiciary be instructed to inquire into the expediency of passing a law, providing for the abolition of slavery, and the prohibition of its extension, wherever Congress has the power so to do. . . .*” The House summarily brushed these maneuvers aside, but a resolution introduced by Daniel Gott of New York on December 21, 1848, calling for suppression of the slave trade in the District, received prompt approval, 98 to 88.⁴

This action, following directly upon renewed endorsement

of the Proviso by the same body, evoked angry protests and crystallized a movement among Southerners in both houses of Congress toward a bipartisan caucus for defense of their section. The first meeting was held on December 23, and from it there emerged a committee charged with preparing an address to the Southern people. All Washington soon knew that Calhoun was at work upon the preliminary draft. When it eventually appeared, the manifesto was dignified in tone, but so extreme in its philosophy that it could command no more than forty-eight signatures. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of suspense during its preparation, as well as the whole trend toward Southern co-operation, had a sobering effect upon the House of Representatives. This was most clearly demonstrated on January 10, 1849, when an attempt to reconsider the Gott resolution came to a vote. Wentworth's motion to table was in vain, and so were all other efforts at resistance. Reconsideration was approved, 119 to 81, and the resolution was buried from sight in the overflowing basket of unfinished business. Three weeks later a bill was reported from committee abolishing the slave trade in the District, and it fared no better. Ignoring Long John's plea for immediate consideration, the House laid it permanently aside.⁵

The Southern Address movement was probably a major cause of this sudden retreat from the Gott resolution, but it was not enough to dislodge the lower house from its position on slavery in the territories. On that issue, even the closing days of the session brought no change in the deadlock between the two chambers, one clinging to the Wilmot Proviso, the other fumbling for some compromise or subterfuge which might unravel the perplexing knot.

In a final desperate stratagem the members of the Senate tried to coerce their stubborn colleagues in the other house. They attached to an essential appropriation bill an amendment extending the Constitution and applicable federal laws to California, and empowering the president to establish a temporary government there. Viewed by many Northern congressmen as a sly attempt to nullify Mexican and local California enactments against slavery, this "Walker Amendment" reached the House two days before adjournment. From that moment until a few hours before the inauguration of Zachary Taylor, the Capitol was a scene of violent disorder in which tempers

blazed, epithets flew, gavels pounded without effect, and private scuffles went unnoticed in the general confusion.

To observers in the gallery, Wentworth stood out as the leader of those opposing the amendment. His towering figure and lusty voice frequently caught the attention of the harassed Speaker. Twice he tried to append the Wilmot Proviso, each time without success. But when the Senate's proposition finally came to a vote in the evening session of March 2, it was rejected, 114 to 100. Long John relaxed. The battle seemed won.

The Senate, however, refused to recede from its amendment. Nor could a conference committee reach agreement. And as the sun went down on March 3, 1849, the appropriation bill, with the Walker Amendment still attached, was once again before the House. The pressure for its passage was now greater than ever. Supporters counted their votes and saw victory within reach, but Wentworth and other stalwarts of the opposition used every parliamentary wile in a grim delaying action. Better to leave the government without funds, they declared, than approve the appropriation with its obnoxious rider. Time began to run out, and frenzied advocates of the measure poured their fury upon the tall adversary from Illinois. Imprecations and threats flew in Long John's direction. Doubled fists waved under his nose. But he maintained his composure and persisted in his tactics of obstruction.⁶

In the end the House rebuffed the Senate for a second time. It enacted a substitute amendment which would retain for another sixteen months the military government and existing laws of California. The Senate, after an angry session that continued through most of the night, preferred to recede from its own amendment and pass the appropriation bill in its original form. Thus the territorial question remained unanswered as Congress adjourned, leaving its troubles for the next nine months with the new president and his counselors.⁷

For the fight he had made against the Walker Amendment, Wentworth received much praise from antislavery editors throughout the North. William Cullen Bryant's newspaper, the *New York Post*, urged that Illinoisans reward him with a seat in the Senate. "To him, more than any other man," it asserted, "are California and New Mexico indebted for the defeat of a proposition made a few hours before the adjournment which if successful would have burdened them with the curse of

slavery. Who that loves freedom does not thank John Wentworth for this?"⁸

The suggestion that Long John be elevated to the Senate was enough to set the editor of the *State Register* frothing at the mouth, since he strongly suspected his Chicago rival of intriguing for just that honor. The Illinois legislature had already elected James Shields to succeed Sidney Breese. But when it was revealed that the popular Irishman fell a few months short of meeting the constitutional residence requirement, the Senate had no choice but to reject him. This threw the race wide open again. The friends of Breese resumed their efforts in his behalf. Shields, whose free-soil tendencies made him attractive to the northern counties, would soon be eligible, and remained a strong candidate. The *Register's* favorite was John McClermand, and its greatest fear was that Long John might somehow take advantage of the confusion to slip into the coveted seat. During the spring and summer of 1849, it aimed a steady stream of abuse toward Chicago, hoping to deflate any Wentworth balloon before it could be released.⁹

Both Wentworth and Douglas advised Governor French to appoint a senator, but he doubted his authority to do so and preferred, in any case, to stand aloof from the heated contest. Instead, he decided to call a special session of the legislature to settle the question. Wentworth disapproved, and some of his enemies promptly charged that he wished to postpone the choice of a senator until a new legislature, more favorable to his candidacy, had been elected.¹⁰

Long John himself disclaimed any desire to have the position. It was a political impossibility anyhow, he pointed out, because Douglas was now a resident of Chicago, and expediency demanded that the other senator come from the central or southern part of the state. Whatever his ambitions, Wentworth received no serious consideration when the legislature assembled in the fall. Shields was re-elected after some spirited competition from Breese and McClermand. But in some quarters Wentworth was still suspected of aspiring to a seat in the Senate. The state legislature had passed resolutions earlier in the year instructing Illinois senators to support the Wilmot Proviso. Douglas might resign rather than obey, and the way would then be open to a Chicagoan who had demonstrated his devotion to the free-soil doctrine.¹¹

Meanwhile, the nation moved with quickening pace to-

ward disaster. Editorials, speeches, and the resolutions of numerous state legislatures clearly demonstrated that opposition to the extension of slavery was becoming more widespread and more adamant in the North. At the same time Southerners were rapidly developing that sense of sectional unity which Calhoun desired. A series of defiant gestures from the slave states was climaxed in October when Mississippi issued its dramatic call for a Southern convention to meet at Nashville on June 3, 1850. Was this the first overt step toward dissolution of the federal Union? The answer would in part depend upon what Congress and the president could accomplish before that date.

Thus far, however, there had been little in Zachary Taylor's conduct to placate his own section. A Southern slaveholder he might be, but in Washington he came under the influence of William Seward and Thurlow Weed, chieftains of New York Whiggery. With their encouragement, he impetuously decided to settle the territorial issue by promoting early statehood for both California and New Mexico. At the invitation of their military governor, Californians chose delegates to a convention, voted approval of the constitution which it drafted, and, by December of 1849, were in the process of establishing a complete state government—all without the usual authorization from Congress.

Since California's constitution prohibited slavery, her admission to the Union, which Taylor urgently requested in his first annual message, would upset the balance between slave and free states. The South, moreover, was offered no compensation for yielding this advantage to the North, no guarantee that it would fare any better when New Mexico was admitted. To her statesmen, the President's program seemed but another way of enacting the Wilmot Proviso. Indeed, there were rumors that Taylor had promised not to veto the Proviso if it should be presented to him.

Among Southern Whigs, there was consternation. They were the strongest advocates of moderation and compromise in their section. Almost to a man they had rejected the Southern Address. But now the President, himself a Southerner and a Whig, was cutting the ground from under their feet and turning the South over to the radical Democrats. This was more than some of them could endure. A group led by Alexander Stephens and Robert Toombs formally withdrew its support from the administration. Party loyalties were visibly

disintegrating under the relentless pressure of sectional hatred, and the bitter strife in recent Congresses seemed only a mild foretaste of what awaited the Thirty-first.

Wentworth, whose second child had died of "cholera infantum" in August, became a father for a third time on November 29, 1849. Two mornings later, he stepped off the railroad cars in Washington after a long night's journey. From the station he hurried directly to the Capitol. A hard contest for the speakership impended, and this meant a delay in the customary drawing for seats on the floor of the House. Meanwhile, early arrivals could take their choice. "In times of great excitement," Long John declared, "a good seat is every thing." About fifty alert congressmen, he discovered, had already made their selections, but he managed to find one desk that seemed especially well located for catching the attention of the chair.¹²

The Whigs had elected a president in 1848, but not a Congress. The Senate was clearly Democratic, while in the House a handful of Free-Soilers held the balance of power between Whigs and Democrats. Party membership, to be sure, carried less meaning in this hour of sectional crisis, but from force of habit it was still the basis for the formal organization of Congress. The Senate assembled on December 3, ready for action, its presiding officer chosen beforehand by the people of the nation. Over in the other hall, however, members must elect a speaker before proceeding to the business of legislation. And in the storm that burst over this routine task, all the complexity and instability of American politics was forcefully illustrated.

The Whigs, in their preliminary caucus, decided to nominate Robert Winthrop of Massachusetts, speaker of the previous Congress, and moderate enough to satisfy some of the Southerners in the party. The Democrats rallied around the hulking figure of Howell Cobb, a Georgian who commanded much respect in the North because of his refusal to sign Calhoun's Southern Address. Most of the Free-Soilers prepared to vote for Wilmot.

According to the official list in the *Congressional Globe*, House membership at the beginning of the session consisted of 112 Democrats, 105 Whigs, and 13 Free-Soilers. But the actual situation was more complicated than these statistics suggest. The Stephens-Toombs group of insurgents, for example, refused to support Winthrop, while in the Democratic ranks there were men like Wentworth whose true sympathies lay

with the Free-Soilers. And even the latter were not united. Those of Whig background found Winthrop unobjectionable, but the Barnburners resolutely turned their backs upon both major candidates. Wentworth's attitude exemplifies the stubborn factionalism which prolonged the deadlock when it developed. Although he acquiesced reluctantly in the caucus endorsement of Cobb, he would vote for no other Southerner, no Northern Democrat of the moderate McClelland stripe, and no Whig from any part of the country.¹³

On the first ballot no fewer than eleven members received votes, but the four most important were:

Cobb (Democrat)	103
Winthrop (Whig)	96
Wilmot (Free-Soiler)	8
Gentry (Southern Whig)	6

The second ballot began immediately. Cobb needed only an increase of eight votes to win. Instead, he fell back to 102, and never again duplicated his opening strength. As the tedious roll calls continued under the clerk's supervision, Winthrop inched up to 102, but could go no further. Ten ballots were taken, then twenty, thirty—without a decision. The daily meetings of the Senate were an empty gesture, for neither house could proceed with legislation until a speaker was elected. Taylor and his advisers watched the spectacle with growing impatience. Across the continent in California a legislature of dubious legality was assembling, a governor was about to be sworn in. There was even some talk of establishing an independent Pacific republic. Farther east, the boundary quarrel between Texas and New Mexico still threatened to erupt into open violence. But in the House of Representatives, the futile drone of voting went on and on.

The little band of Free-Soilers, who could have ended the contest at any time, seemed to enjoy the situation, and so did Wentworth. On the first four ballots he supported Cobb; then he shifted to Wilmot, then back to Cobb, then to Wilmot again. And in the days that followed, he skipped capriciously among a variety of names, with no apparent motive except to squander his vote.

The afternoon of December 10 brought a new development. Long John was one of fifty-three members who suddenly transferred their votes to William Brown of Indiana. This was

strange behavior, unless he had some inkling of what lay ahead, because Brown was a Polk Democrat, whose strongest support came from Southerners. Swiftly, the disorganized Democrats mobilized behind their new candidate. In seven ballots the next day, his total rose from 80 to 109, and on December 12, it jumped to 112—two short of election.

But now many Southerners had become suspicious. There was “something rotten in Denmark,” a North Carolina Whig declared. For what had happened overnight to attract five Free-Soilers to Brown’s standard? As questions and accusations filled the air, the harried Indiana congressman first denied, then admitted, giving certain assurances to Wilmot about the appointment of committees. In the explosion of argument that followed, a New York Whig hurled the words “disunionist” and “liar” at a Virginia Democrat. Restraining arms held the two men apart, but “threats, violent gesticulations, calls to order, and demands for adjournment” threw the session into wild confusion. “The House,” wrote its official reporter, “was like a heaving billow.”¹⁴

When the tumult subsided and the voting was resumed, Brown had withdrawn from the contest. On the forty-first ballot, thirty members received votes, and the highest score was 59! The House was now further from a choice than ever.

For another week the profitless struggle continued. Then, on December 22, a Democrat from Tennessee proposed that after three more ballots, the speaker be elected by a simple plurality. Although this solution favored the more numerous Democrats, it apparently originated in a caucus of Whigs, who not only feared that the impasse was undermining their administration, but may also have hoped that the Free-Soilers, in a showdown, would prefer Winthrop to Cobb.

The effect of the motion, however, was to strip Wilmot and his associates of their critical influence. When it passed, over their angry opposition, they clung to their course of stubborn independence, thereby almost guaranteeing Democratic success. The decisive ballot was the sixty-third. Wentworth, who had already changed his allegiance thirty-one times, now returned to give Cobb one of the votes that elected him, 102 to 100.¹⁵

An audible sigh of relief ran through the hall as Winthrop graciously escorted his victorious rival to the speaker’s chair, but the truce was of short duration. For another month, while

the sectional crisis deepened, the House engaged in further wrangling over rules and officers. Twenty ballots were required to choose a new clerk, eight to elect a sergeant-at-arms. And after fourteen roll calls failed to produce a doorkeeper, that task was laid aside for the session. The end of January was near before even the president's annual message could obtain consideration.¹⁶

The Senate, meanwhile, was not immune from the furious passions that convulsed the lower house. Discussion of the most routine subjects was frequently interrupted by outbursts of sectional animosity. The slavery issue was like a leech, attaching itself to every detail of legislation, and relentlessly draining away the vitality of the democratic process. From the seat to which he had returned after an absence of seven years, Henry Clay looked on with growing alarm. Aged and ill, but still retaining that magnetic charm which had won the affections of so many contemporaries, he pushed aside his chronic weariness to make one final effort for his country.

Clay, who wisely perceived the importance of dramatizing the word "compromise," presented a complete formula for restoring domestic concord in a series of eight resolutions offered on January 29, 1850. As separate proposals, their substance was already familiar to Congress. The new feature was their consolidation into a sweeping program of mutual concession, in which the only clear-cut victor would be the federal Union. Immediate admission of California was balanced against organization of New Mexico without restrictions on slavery; rejection of the grandiose boundary claimed by Texas was offset by federal assumption of the burdensome Texan debt; the slave trade was to be abolished in the District of Columbia, but a stronger fugitive slave law was promised the South.

Here was bold, dynamic compromise—a chance for the long-suffering advocates of moderation to seize the initiative. Swiftly the battle lines formed for the most memorable legislative debate in American history. Webster braved the wrath of the New England conscience to give the plan his vigorous support. Calhoun, near death, opposed it, sitting feebly in his chair while another senator read his valedictory demand for justice to the South. Cass and Douglas were favorable; Benton was not. William Seward and Jefferson Davis spoke for the two extremes of radicalism in spurning the proposals. Day after

day, giants of the past and future took their turns upon the Senate floor in that spring tide of national eloquence.

New political alignments, cutting across parties and sections, suddenly appeared throughout the country, as compromisers opposed irreconcilables in communities from Maine to Texas. In Chicago, the *Journal* rallied behind Clay, but the *Democrat* had only hostile words for his plan, rejecting with especial vehemence the proposed fugitive slave law. "They had better make us negro drivers at once," it exclaimed, "and present each man, woman, and child of the free States with a cat-o-nine-tails and a pair of hand cuffs, to enable them the more readily to execute the hellish work they would thrust upon us."

For Wentworth, California had become a cause as sacred as Oregon. Simple justice, in his opinion, demanded her admission to statehood, unadulterated by odious concessions to the South. "The day of compromise is past," he proclaimed. "The whole or none is the word. Fifty-four forty or fight."¹⁷

In his attitude of intransigence, Long John found himself allied with the man whose election he had worked so hard to prevent. Zachary Taylor had his own solution of the territorial problem, and he was not to be diverted from it by Clay's more ambitious design. Let the troublesome regions be admitted as states without delay, and the Texas boundary dispute could then be settled by judicial decision. This was still the "Presidential Plan," and the stubborn old warrior reiterated his adherence to it on February 13, when he submitted to Congress a copy of the "Constitution of the State of California."¹⁸

In the hall where Wentworth sat, Southerners greeted this renewed pressure from the White House with bitter denunciation, while antislavery men eagerly accepted it as a point of departure for aggressive action. On February 18, as the "Great Debate" gathered momentum in the other chamber, James Doty of Wisconsin offered a resolution directing the Committee on Territories to report a bill admitting California without reference to other territories.

There followed one of those wild scenes that were becoming dangerously frequent in this year of national ordeal. Knowing that they faced certain defeat if the resolution reached a vote, Southerners launched a furious campaign of obstruction and delay, piling one dilatory motion upon another until the original proposition was buried beneath a weird tangle of par-

liamentary nonsense. For twelve hours the fierce and ludicrous battle continued. Eighteen motions to adjourn were made and rejected, each by monotonous roll call. The free-soil advocates fumed and protested at this frustration of the majority's will, but by midnight an incongruous mood of drowsy merriment had descended upon the hall. When Speaker Cobb announced that "resolutions day" had officially ended, and that the Doty proposal was consequently no longer the order of business, the House consented to adjourn.¹⁹

The sober epilogue to this turbulent performance was enacted the following evening, when Cobb, Stephens, Toombs, McClelland, Richardson, and other moderates of both sections assembled to discuss methods of preventing its repetition. The critical question, obviously, was not whether California should be admitted, but whether its admission should be accompanied by protection of Southern rights in the remainder of the Mexican Cession. Support in Congress for a separate California bill was by no means limited to friends of the Wilmot Proviso. Douglas and most Northern compromisers favored it. So did Henry Clay. But circumstances were now beginning to force a change in their attitude. Largely because of the administration's obstinate policy, the disunion movement in the South was rolling to its crest. With their backs to the wall at home, Southern conservatives insisted that California be used as a hostage—that it be coupled with the proposed territorial bills, in order to protect the latter against legislative miscarriage and the executive veto.

The Northerners attending the meeting agreed to this demand. McClelland and Douglas drew up for introduction in both houses a formula which embraced the California, territorial, and Texas-boundary features of Clay's compromise resolutions. Early in April McClelland presented the plan to the House as a single measure. But in the Senate, Douglas and his Committee on Territories divorced California from the other sections and reported two separate bills.

Under persistent pressure from the Southern conservatives, however, these two Douglas bills were subsequently tied together once more and offered to the Senate in a single package, which soon became famous as the "Omnibus Bill." This was done on May 8 by a special "Committee of Thirteen," headed by Clay, to which the whole subject of compromise had been referred. In addition to the "Omnibus," the committee also re-

ported separate measures dealing with fugitive slaves and slave trade in the District of Columbia. The timing was excellent. With the Nashville Convention only weeks away, a comprehensive program of sectional conciliation was laid before the Senate—and the nation.²⁰

In the House, meanwhile, the strategy of opposing forces had produced a different situation. McClelland's version of the "Omnibus" had been little more than a gesture, and the friends of compromise did not press for its passage. Instead, they took up a defensive position, prepared to hold the line against any legislation touching the slavery question until the Senate had taken action. The free-soil forces, on the other hand, were determined to confront the Senate with a California bill while the compromise was still under construction—tactics which President Taylor heartily approved.

Doty's resolution was again the order of the day on March 4, but he withdrew it, after receiving unanimous consent to place a bill admitting California before the Committee of the Whole. In accepting this arrangement the free-soilers committed a serious blunder. The committee did not vote by roll call, and Northern proponents of compromise, who dared not be recorded against the resolution, could oppose the bill with impunity. During the months that followed, the sectional debate swirled about the attempts of supporters to get the Doty bill reported from the committee. No man worked harder than Wentworth to close debate on the measure, but his efforts and all others were repeatedly frustrated by an alliance of compromisers and Southern irreconcilables.²¹

Long John had nothing but contempt for those who believed that the country was in danger. Threats of dissolving the Union were all a bluff, he maintained, a "game of brag and bluster played by southern men in order to give their northern allies an excuse for betraying the cause of free labor." With each passing week, his anger mounted against the Northern enemies of the Doty bill. "Our doughfaces will betray us again," he wrote to a friend. And the *Democrat* charged that "these northern men with southern principles have been the real slavery agitators in this country. . . . Their meat and drink has been to keep up this war between the north and south."²²

The fact was that the spirit of conciliation was steadily growing throughout the country, and the effect could be felt in the halls of Congress. Moreover, as the heat of summer ad-

vanced upon Washington, several formidable obstacles to compromise were suddenly removed. First, the Nashville Convention in June proved to be less successful and less radical than many had expected, indicating that the disunionists were still a small minority in the Southern states. Then, in July, President Taylor died, and his antipathy toward the compromise measures was replaced by the warm approval of Millard Fillmore. The "Omnibus" plan, to be sure, was broken into pieces on the Senate floor, but with Taylor dead, it was no longer so important. Douglas, who had always doubted the wisdom of the "Omnibus," took over the leadership from a disconsolate Clay and prepared to enact the compromise in six separate measures.

In the other chamber, Wentworth and his free-soil associates intensified their struggle to release the Doty bill from its imprisonment. They had finally won an order terminating debate in the Committee of the Whole on June 11. But on that date, the hour-long harangues merely gave way to other methods of delay. Six more weeks of neglect followed, and then on July 24, the measure again became first in the order of business, whereupon the committee promptly voted to lay it aside in favor of an appropriation bill.

Wentworth had been a frequent participant in the turmoil of parliamentary maneuvering that enveloped the Doty bill, but down until this moment he had delivered no speeches on the subject. Now, however, he arose in great exasperation and addressed the committee for about twenty minutes. California, he protested, had been virtually rejected, for when the appropriation bills were passed, Congress invariably adjourned. Men who had befriended California in the House, where the ayes and nays could be demanded, had turned their backs upon her in the committee. And why? Perhaps they had been deceived by cunning Southern strategy, but he was beginning to fear that there was "a balance-of-power party in the North, who hoped to advance their political fortunes by playing into the hands of the South."

By admitting California and then New Mexico, Long John continued, most of the sectional controversy could be settled. And only the united vote of the North was needed to accomplish it. He entreated all the professed friends of California to reject the next motion to lay aside the Doty bill. Otherwise, all

chances of her admission this session were "gone forever."²³

Few men believed this gloomy forecast, and Wentworth's appeal was not heeded. Again and again, appropriation bills were given priority, and by August it was apparent that the interminable filibuster had succeeded, for the compromise measures were beginning to come from the Senate. After much argument over the order of consideration, the House chose to vote first upon a consolidated version of the bills fixing the boundary of Texas and creating a Territory of New Mexico. This was to be the test.

Now came the most critical hour of the compromise. From September 4 to 6, the hall was in a continual uproar. Members filled the aisles and crowded around the speaker's table. Calls for order had little effect upon the noise and confusion. Northern and Southern opponents joined in an attempt to delay action upon the bill by referring it to the Committee of the Whole. On September 4, the House decided by two votes to commit, then reconsidered and, by the same margin, declined to do so. In a wild session the next day Wentworth again moved to commit, this time with instructions that included the Wilmot Proviso. The motion was defeated, but the battle went on. Twice the House refused to engross the bill. Twice the refusal was reconsidered. At last, on September 6, to the accompaniment of shouts, whistles, and stamping of feet, the measure received final approval.²⁴

All that followed was anticlimax. Everyone knew that the compromise had succeeded. California was swiftly admitted the next afternoon, and the House then immediately resolved itself into Committee of the Whole in order to take up the Utah territorial bill. David Wilmot had already departed for home, but his Proviso was now offered for one last time in an amendment proposed by Wentworth. Pleading for a favorable vote in committee so that it could be brought to a roll-call test on the House floor, Long John declared:

I am not so blind to the existing state of things in this House as not to know that this amendment will be voted down; but in the spirit of amity and concord [a laugh] which has prevailed generally for a few days past, I hope the House will consent that the small minority now in favor of the Wilmot proviso may have the opportunity of recording their votes upon the question.

But it was a hopeless cause. Only 69 affirmative votes could be mustered, and his amendment failed. The Utah bill, which, like its New Mexico counterpart, neither forbade nor authorized slavery in the new territory, was approved a short time later. Wentworth registered the only vote against it from Illinois.²⁵

Within ten more days the House had completed work upon the compromise by approving a stronger fugitive slave law and abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia. Thus the end came with amazing speed in the hall where four years had hitherto brought no yielding to the South on the territorial and slavery questions. But pressures from the president, Senate, and public were tremendous, the compromise managers were adept parliamentarians, the enemies of compromise were divided into two groups that hated each other, the weather was uncomfortably warm, and looming midterm elections beckoned politicians home. Moreover, some of the extremists may have felt in their hearts that they had been wrestling with shadows. Even Wentworth, after fighting the compromise with a tenacity unsurpassed by the sternest abolitionists, wrote on September 8 (the day after the passage of the Utah bill) that there was little chance of slavery's taking root in the two new territories. This, of course, was the very argument advanced by Douglas and Webster to justify the application of the popular sovereignty principle to that region.²⁶

No group in Congress had contributed more to the success of the compromise than the Illinois Democrats. In addition to the superb leadership of Douglas and McClelland, the support of Shields, Harris, Richardson, Young, and Bissell had aided its passage. Wentworth was the great exception—the only Democrat from his state to cast a negative vote. During the months of debate, party leaders in Illinois noted his vociferous opposition with rising anger. Many of them applauded Ebenezer Peck when he established the *Democratic Argus* in Chicago for the sole purpose of making war upon his old enemy. Douglas, now completely disgusted with Long John's behavior, and eyeing the presidential nomination in 1852, also began to negotiate for the publication of an orthodox Democratic newspaper in the city. From all parts of the state there came a fierce clamor for the repudiation of this "abolitionist" and "traitor." "Let the democracy no longer suffer a man who voted to place Wilmot

in the speaker's chair to represent them in Congress," urged a writer in the *State Register*.²⁷

But Wentworth soon made it clear that he was not a candidate. Influenced, perhaps, by the ferocity of the outcry against him, he adhered to his earlier promise and announced his retirement from Congress. The elimination of one controversial figure was not enough to unite the Democracy of the fourth district, however. There was strong opposition in the Chicago region to those parts of the compromise which favored the South—especially to the Fugitive Slave Law. And the Free-Soil Democrats, who had been drifting back toward their old party allegiance, now rebelled again in anticipation of a repugnant nomination by the regular district convention. Calling their own meeting at Elgin on August 28, they nominated William B. Ogden as their candidate for Congress.²⁸

When the Cook County Democratic Convention assembled on September 4, it was immediately apparent that Long John's adversaries held the upper hand. A resolution against the extension of slavery, introduced by Bradley, was beaten down, and only one of Wentworth's friends was included in the list of delegates to the district convention. But at Joliet, a few days later, it was a different story. From the smaller communities came many devoted free-soil men, and they united to support Long John's old New Hampshire schoolmate, Richard Moloney. As usual, the convention bordered upon riot. The climax this time was an acrimonious exchange between Peck and Moloney. When the latter was nominated, Peck announced his customary bolt from the ticket, and the *State Register* dolorously refused to list the candidate as a Democrat.²⁹

Offsetting this repulse from the mouthpiece of orthodox Democracy was the withdrawal of Ogden, who saw the need for his candidacy eliminated, as Moloney traveled up and down the district demanding the end of slavery extension and the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law. Wentworth returned to Chicago in later October, just in time to make several speeches in support of Moloney and witness his victory at the polls. The *Register* consoled itself with the thought that Long John's political career was finally closed, but the fact remained that the choice of his successor had amounted to a ringing endorsement of the course he had followed. How long, his enemies wondered, would retirement hold this man? ³⁰

CHAPTER VII

The Prudent Years

Wentworth is as industrious, just now, conciliating his foes, as a spider catching flies.—QUINCY HERALD, *quoted in* CHICAGO DAILY DEMOCRAT, June 1, 1852.

IN THE YEAR 1850, John Wentworth was generally regarded as one of the most radical antislavery men in public life. He had been an original supporter of the Wilmot Proviso in 1846, and its last advocate on the floor of Congress four years later. He had consorted freely with men like Preston King and Joshua Giddings, and had fought the Clay-Douglas program for sectional conciliation with all the tenacity of a Garrisonian zealot. Consequently, there was no little surprise among political leaders in Illinois, and elsewhere, when he accepted the victory of the compromisers with an equanimity that bordered on relief.

The *Democrat* rejoiced at the “wonderful calm” that had settled upon the country as a result of excluding slavery from Oregon and California. “As things now stand,” it asserted, “there being no territory to apply the Proviso to, there is no principle involved at all.” Only the Fugitive Slave Law threatened to cause trouble, and if Southerners would keep their Negroes at home, then “the days of slavery agitation” were over in Illinois. Upon returning to Washington in December of 1850, Long John personally demonstrated his acquiescence in the compromise by announcing that the two main issues facing the

second session of the Thirty-first Congress were internal improvements and cheaper postage.¹

The slavery controversy, after all, had subjected Wentworth for several years to painfully contradictory pressures from his constituents, on the one hand, and the leaders of the Illinois Democracy, on the other. And however strong his private aversion to slavery may have been, the growing radicalism of his district in the 1840's had pushed him farther down the road of insurgency than he had desired to go. To join the Whigs was inconceivable for a man who detested their very name, and he had already shrewdly foreseen that the Free-Soil party would become a political cul-de-sac. Therefore, unless his political career was to end at the age of thirty-six, he must regain the right to call himself a regular Democrat. The subsidence of sectional discord presented an opportunity for just such a retreat to orthodoxy. Now he could turn from the Wilmot Proviso to internal improvements, banks, homesteads, and the tariff—issues upon which Democrats could still disagree without shaking the foundations of the Union.

His deep prejudice against the slave-state politicians did not disappear with the enactment of the compromise. He continued to deplore their "bullying" attitude toward the North and their persistent opposition to rivers-and-harbors legislation. But even this antipathy was temporarily mollified in September of 1850, when votes from certain Southerners helped pass the bill granting federal land to Illinois for the construction of a central railroad. This historic land grant—the cornerstone of the great Illinois Central—was approved only after several years of vigorous promotion in which Wentworth played an active part.

The project of a north-south railroad in Illinois, connecting the mouth of the Ohio, at Cairo, with Lake Michigan and the upper reaches of the Mississippi, had been advocated for years. It had been a part of the abortive internal improvement system begun so unpropitiously on the eve of nationwide depression in 1837. During the period of ruined state credit that followed this fiasco, Illinoisans turned hopefully to Washington for assistance in carrying forward the principal features of their ambitious program. Casting covetous eyes upon the millions of acres which the federal government still owned within the state, Wentworth and other members of the Illinois delegation in Congress tried repeatedly to obtain grants of land for finishing the Illinois and Michigan Canal, and for construction of a

central railroad. But constitutional objections, together with the widespread belief among Easterners that benefits from the public domain should be shared equally by all the states, always resulted in opposition which was too powerful to overcome.

In the end, the completion of the canal was financed by a new loan, floated largely among creditors of the state who hoped thereby to raise the value of the dubious bonds which they already held. Private capital could not be found to build the railroad, however, and the agitation for federal aid continued. The anticipation of personal profits through land speculation along the proposed route was a partial motivation for many leading advocates of the project, including Senators Stephen Douglas and Sidney Breese. Douglas, who had tied his financial future to the value of Chicago real estate, introduced a land grant bill in 1848 which passed the Senate, but failed by six votes in the House. Breese had long been associated with a southern Illinois group of financiers and land speculators led by Darius Holbrook, whose promotion of a central railroad dated back to 1835. Their "Great Western Railway Company" had once held a charter to build a road from Galena to Cairo, and they still claimed a kind of prescriptive right to exploit any federal subsidy that might be obtained for that purpose.

Instead of an outright grant, Breese preferred to sponsor a plan which would allow his company to pre-empt more than a million acres along the projected route at the minimum price of \$1.25 an acre. His Illinois colleagues were not enthusiastic, but in December of 1848, he was permitted to substitute a pre-emption bill for the land grant measure which Douglas had again introduced. Passing the Senate without difficulty, this Breese bill languished in the House until near the end of the short session. By March 3, 1849, when both houses were in an uproar over Oregon and the Walker Amendment, it had advanced successfully through a third reading, only to be laid aside. With the time for adjournment drawing near, Wentworth led a last-minute fight to force a final vote upon the proposition, but his efforts were frustrated. It did not pass. At this point the senatorial career of Sidney Breese came to a close, and his pre-emption scheme passed quickly into oblivion. Thereafter, the Douglas plan could be expected to receive the unreserved support of the entire Illinois delegation.²

When the next Congress assembled, however, the slavery

controversy had reached its most critical hour, and the danger of disunion completely engrossed the thoughts of many political leaders. The session of 1849–1850 seemed hardly a favorable time to renew the appeal for a land grant. But zeal for the central railroad transcended even the sectional conflict. Soon after the election of Cobb as speaker had lifted the blockade upon legislation, a determined Douglas confronted the Senate with his now familiar bill. Wentworth made a gesture towards initiating a similar measure in the House, then thought better of it and settled back with the other Illinois congressmen to await the action of the upper house.

Again the Douglas bill passed the Senate, but not before it had been amended in a remarkable way. Strict constructionists had frequently argued that the grant was unconstitutional because the proposed railroad would lie entirely within the boundaries of a single state. Their complaint was now answered by adding grants of land to Mississippi and Alabama, thereby moving the southern terminus from Cairo to Mobile. This extension was brilliant political strategy, for it made the central railroad an interstate, even an intersectional project. Nothing could better suit the spirit of the times, its advocates declared, than a new transportation link between North and South. It was a veritable corollary to the great compromise. And from a more practical viewpoint, it could now command the support of Gulf-state “fire-eaters” like Jefferson Davis and Jacob Thompson.³

The raging struggle over slavery and the territories delayed action in the House until mid-September. Meanwhile, promoters of the bill worked industriously to line up votes for its crucial test. Any measure which had the united support of such habitual antagonists as Wentworth, McClernand, and Thompson might appear to have been destined for easy passage. But the South Atlantic congressmen were overwhelmingly opposed, and those from Kentucky and Tennessee—states containing no federal land—were divided. Much depended, therefore, upon the heavy vote from the Northeast.

Easterners had long been pulled in two directions by the Illinois railroad grant. Some viewed the proposal as an unjustifiable raid upon the public domain. Others saw in it an opportunity to extend the Great Lakes highway of commerce into the heart of the Illinois prairies, and thereby strengthen the ties of their section with this fastest-growing state of the Northwest.

In 1848, the Northeast had contributed thirty-five votes for the Douglas bill in the House, and twenty-seven against it.⁴ A retention of this slight advantage in 1850 would assure its passage because of the new support from Southwestern congressmen. But the expansion of the project to embrace the Gulf states decreased its appeal among Easterners, to whom the proposed railroad now appeared as an auxiliary to the Mississippi River which would divert trade southward, instead of tapping new areas for the benefit of Eastern seaports. Nor were the antislavery radicals of New England and New York in a mood for laying gifts at the feet of Alabama and Mississippi.

There is no reliable record of the complicated maneuvers and private bargaining that preceded the vote upon the land grant in the lower house. According to his *Congressional Reminiscences* (published thirty-two years later), Wentworth saved the day by arranging an agreement which secured Eastern votes in exchange for the promise of Western help on tariff revision. Although numerous writers have accepted his explanation, supporting evidence is thin, and the story has been completely rejected by the leading authority on the Illinois Central.⁵

Nevertheless, Sidney Breese subsequently declared that Wentworth did have a unique influence among New York and Massachusetts congressmen which "contributed most essentially" to the success of the measure. Long John's free-soil convictions, after all, opened many doors that were closed to other members of the Illinois delegation. More important was the pressure applied in favor of the bill by Eastern holders of Illinois bonds who expected the grant to improve the state's credit. Wentworth had become acquainted with some of these men during the refinancing of the Illinois canal, and he undoubtedly helped arouse their interest in the central railroad.⁶

Whatever may have persuaded them, 38 Northeastern congressmen supported the bill, and only 33 opposed it, when the final test came on September 17. By 101 votes to 75, the land grant passed the House and received President Fillmore's signature three days later. "The long struggle is now over," Long John exclaimed. "My ambition is more than realized. I go into private life with the proudest satisfaction."⁷

The act provided for federal donation of a right-of-way through public lands from Mobile to Chicago (with a branch to Dubuque), plus alternate sections to a depth of six miles on

each side of the road. In its specific terms as well as in its general munificence, the measure thus foreshadowed later grants for railroads to the Pacific—with one important exception: in 1850, the land was awarded directly to the states rather than to corporations. As a result the Illinois legislature which assembled early in 1851 was faced with the task of determining the disposition of the federal grant, the method of building the road, and the exact route that it should follow. A swarm of importunate lobbyists descended upon Springfield to advise the lawmakers during their deliberations.

Remembering all too clearly their bitter experiences with state construction in the 1830's, Illinoisans were generally agreed that the land grant should be exploited and the railroad built by a responsible private company. Three groups of capitalists were competitors for the privilege. Holbrook and the Cairo interests began to make surveys and negotiate contracts in the expectation of receiving the charter. Julius Wadsworth, the state's financial agent in New York, offered a cumbersome plan whereby certain leading bondholders would finance construction of the road. Still another application came from a combination of Eastern capitalists who were already engaged in promoting various railroads, particularly the Michigan Central.

This third group, which included such impressive names as Robert Schuyler (president of five railway companies), Hiram Ketchum, David Neal, and George Griswold, had the greatest financial resources, but the fewest contacts in Illinois. It therefore hastened to enlist the support of John Wentworth, William Bissell, and other men of influence in the state. Shortly after Congress adjourned in the fall of 1850, a lobbyist for the group discussed the charter problem thoroughly with Long John and reported: "*Wentworth is satisfied & will do all he can.*"⁸

For a number of reasons Wentworth was easily persuaded to endorse Schuyler and his associates. He disliked the Holbrook faction because southern Illinois had been consistently unsympathetic to the needs of Chicago. He had equally strong objections to the charter proposed by Wadsworth, especially to a section which bestowed banking privileges upon the incorporators and suggested an emphasis upon speculation rather than railroad building. The Schuyler men, on the other hand, appeared willing to accept certain provisions which he strongly

avored: that a definite starting and completion date be set for construction, and that the railroad company pay a guaranteed percentage of its annual gross profits into the state treasury.⁹

According to Wentworth's testimony in later years, the Schuyler group even submitted its draft of a charter for his inspection, and allowed him to insert the unique clause making the governor of Illinois an ex-officio director of the company. Meanwhile, he had agreed to write a series of articles for distribution to friendly newspapers, and his subeditor, David Bradley, was detailed to join the legion of lobbyists in Springfield. By January the *Democrat* had launched a vigorous assault upon the Holbrook and Wadsworth interests, while down in the state capital Bissell and Mason Brayman, together with Robert Rantoul of Massachusetts, were directing a promotional campaign which the legislature found irresistible. A bill awarding the charter and the federal land grant to Schuyler and his associates was passed and signed on February 10, 1851. One month later the Illinois Central Railroad Company was organized.¹⁰

Long John had now played a vital role as congressman and publicist in securing the necessary federal and state legislation, but his services to the new company had not yet ended. It still needed help in Chicago, where its allies of the Michigan Central were engaged in a fierce struggle with the rival Michigan Southern over the right to enter the city. Without authority to build their own lines beyond the Indiana boundary, both railroads were depending upon coalitions with Illinois companies to reach their goal. The Michigan Central hoped to enter Chicago upon tracks constructed by the new Illinois Central, while the Southern joined forces with the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad for the same purpose.

Now it was the Common Council of Chicago which felt the pressure of railroad lobbyists. In the debate that filled the air, Wentworth opposed the granting of exclusive privileges to either contestant, and the *Democrat* struck the pose of a disinterested guardian of the city's welfare. But privately Wentworth was in regular communication with the New York office of the Illinois Central and with Mason Brayman, whose diligence as a lobbyist in Springfield had been rewarded by appointment to the legal staff of the company. Long John's influence upon Democratic aldermen was a powerful factor in overcoming the resistance of Mayor Walter Gurnee and per-

suading the council to pass, in December of 1851, an ordinance which gave the Illinois Central its unusual lakeside route into Chicago.¹¹ The construction of a road to the Indiana line was begun immediately with money supplied by the Michigan Central. Meanwhile, the Michigan Southern had completed its arrangements for entering the city upon Rock Island tracks, and by the summer of 1852, Chicago boasted two rail connections with the East.

In answer to an energetic advertising campaign, laborers by the thousands poured in to work upon the Illinois Central for \$1.25 a day, and the laying of tracks was pushed with such remarkable speed that the project was finished by 1856. Throughout these five years of construction, the Chicago *Democrat* published so many progress reports, land sale announcements, financial statements, and other notices, that it was soon generally looked upon as the "official" paper of the railroad. Thus, from the land grant to the final spike, Wentworth had not wavered in his devotion to the Illinois Central.

Other political leaders received generous personal rewards for their services to the company, and Wentworth was probably no exception, although the exact nature of his compensation is not clear. In the advertising patronage which they awarded the *Democrat*, the officials of the railroad made little more than a token payment upon their debt of gratitude. There was always the land grant, of course, and a rival editor later charged that Long John obtained "many acres for his services to the Great Central Railroad, without money or price."¹² Yet no record has been found of any such transaction. Wentworth was acquiring numerous tracts of land during the 1850's, but not from the Illinois Central.

It has also been suggested that his principal reward was the privilege of subscribing to the company's capital stock, which offered an attractive opportunity for investment because it was issued with the understanding that only a nominal fraction of its par value would ever be assessed. But the ledgers of the Illinois Central reveal that Long John did not become a stockholder until November 2, 1854, when he bought 250 shares from Ketchum, Rogers, and Bement, a New York banking firm. By that date the securities of the company had slumped badly in value on the stock market, and holders were unloading them at a rapid rate. Wentworth's purchase was therefore easily made, and represented no special favor from

company officials. Seventeen months later, with the price of the stock climbing upward again, he disposed of his shares, probably at a considerable profit, and transferred his interest to the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad.¹³

Whatever the nature and value of the perquisites which his services to the Illinois Central earned for him, Wentworth also benefited politically from the association of his name with the railroad during the early fifties. Overshadowing all other corporations in the state, directing the movements of an army of construction workers whose illegal votes often decided local elections, the Central was a powerful patron for any politician. While his enemies fumed at the prestige accruing to the *Democrat* as the official organ of the road, Long John cemented the alliance more firmly in 1853 by hiring a younger brother of Mason Brayman as an assistant editor.¹⁴

But in his efforts to build a personal fortune, a project to which he could devote his full attention after retiring from Congress in the spring of 1851, Wentworth depended less upon railroad investments than upon land speculation. By mid-century, with the canal completed and railroad construction accelerating, Chicago was ripe for another feverish real-estate boom. The census of 1850 revealed that the population of the city had risen from 12,000 to almost 30,000 in five years, and as the residential area spread out to absorb this increase, land strategically located in the main paths of expansion shot upward in value. Many a town lot held for only a few years returned its owner double—treble—even ten times his purchase price.

Under such favorable conditions, few men of means failed to invest some portion of their wealth in land, and every owner of the smallest plot was in effect a speculator whether he intended to be or not. For the man engaged in the time-consuming but financially unrewarding profession of politics, land speculation offered an easy supplement to his meager income from salaries, as well as the best retirement insurance for his old age that was then available. Among leading Illinois politicians, Abraham Lincoln was almost alone in standing aloof from the temptations and opportunities of the real-estate business.

During his early years in Chicago, Wentworth also refrained from purchasing land, but only because he lacked the necessary funds. The times were hard, and his first concern was

always the welfare of the *Democrat*. But by 1844 the newspaper was cleared of indebtedness and earning a good profit, he was saving some money from his congressman's salary, and—most important of all—he had acquired a wealthy father-in-law. Shortly before his marriage Long John bought two lots in the Fort Dearborn Addition (near the mouth of the Chicago River), paying, it is said, \$2,600, and selling them several years later for \$30,000.¹⁵ With this transaction he was launched upon another career. In the very period that the *Democrat* cried out most angrily against "land monopoly," its editor was laying the foundation of a large fortune by purchasing land for speculative purposes.

Wentworth acquired most of his land from four sources: the federal government, tax sales, private owners, and the commissioners of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Few government lands of any value remained in the immediate vicinity of Chicago, but the official records show that Long John bought over four hundred acres of the public domain between 1846 and 1851. Located many miles to the north and west of the city, these scattered plots were not likely to enrich their owner in the near future, but at \$1.25 per acre they were still a bargain.¹⁶

More promising purchases were possible at the sheriff's regular sales of land for delinquent taxes. For a ridiculously low price, plus payment of the overdue taxes, a buyer could obtain a certificate which entitled him to apply for a tax deed to a piece of land if the previous owner did not redeem it within three years. In 1845, and for at least a decade thereafter, Wentworth or one of his agents attended these sales regularly and bought many acres of farm land—mostly in the Lake Calumet region—as well as scores of town lots in Chicago and at Summit, ten miles southwest of the city.¹⁷

The most fortunate of Long John's investments, however, were in the area just south of Chicago. These also began in 1845, with his purchase from the Wisconsin Marine and Fire Insurance Company of two plots along what is now South State Street. At about the same time he acquired two smaller parcels near by, paying ten dollars an acre for thirty-eight acres.¹⁸ He did not add to his holdings in this district during the next six years. But in the spring of 1851, with the assurance of financial help from his father-in-law, he returned from Washington eager to look for bargains in Chicago real estate.

Together, Wentworth and Riley Loomis bought nearly seven hundred acres south and southwest of the city during the early 1850's, at prices averaging about twenty dollars an acre. Their largest acquisition was over half a section of swampy land where the Union Stockyards are now situated. A second group of purchases embraced today's McKinley Park and much of the area north to the canal, while still another tract of eighty acres was located farther east, near Long John's earlier holdings, and included the spot now occupied by Comiskey Park.¹⁹

Most of this land was obtained at canal sales, which had been held annually since 1848, when the commissioners had resumed their disposal of the original federal grant made in 1827. The sales attracted large numbers of speculators, and bidding was brisk, especially for town lots, in which Wentworth also invested heavily, buying at least eleven between 1851 and 1853, at prices ranging from \$485 to \$1,500 apiece. Under the rules then in effect he was required to pay one fourth down, and the balance over a three-year period. With property values rising during the decade, and with the certificates of purchase negotiable in the event that installments could not be paid, there was little risk for the buyer in such a transaction.²⁰

Judging by his attitude toward the acreages which he had acquired south of the city, Wentworth belonged to that more useful variety of speculator who believed in raising the value of his land by fencing, drainage, and other improvements. In 1852, he wrote to Judge David Davis, who had bought an eighty-acre tract in the vicinity, urging him to co-operate with the plans of certain owners to build "a very beautiful street" into the city. "If our present plan of laying out Chicago at the South is carried out," said Long John, "your children will realize a fortune from this lot of yours." Then he added, "Like you, Judge, I am holding upon mine for the rise, but I have always gone in for streets, & so have . . . all our successful speculators. Besides, if we do not make these streets to suit the people, the jurisdiction of the city will be extended over us so as to not only compel us to make the streets but also to pay city taxes."²¹

The hope here expressed that his land might remain outside the corporate limits of Chicago was doomed by the pressure of expanding population. Within a year the southern boundary was extended to what is now Thirty-first Street, and several of Wentworth's holdings were thereby annexed to the city. But he

anticipated the action in time to dispose of his two northernmost plots—of eighteen and twenty acres—at a thousand dollars per acre. These were the same pieces of land that he had purchased in 1845 for ten dollars an acre.²²

Wentworth would continue to buy and sell property in this manner for the rest of his life, but in the early 1850's a new purpose began to motivate his land purchases. Throughout the years that had intervened since his industrious boyhood in the hills and meadows of New Hampshire, Long John's love for farming had never deserted him. Visits to Mount Vernon and Monticello had apparently excited his admiration for the gracious life of a country gentleman. And the canal sales of the period offered an excellent opportunity to acquire an estate near Chicago at reasonable cost.

During the spring of 1853, he bought an entire section in the neighborhood of Summit for thirteen dollars an acre. This was to be the nucleus of a farm on which he planned to specialize in blooded livestock. But the northern edge of the tract was almost a mile south of the canal, with its unlimited and year-round supply of water. So Long John cajoled and badgered canal officials into selling him more land in private transactions, while he also purchased several adjacent plots from their individual owners. By 1855, he had assembled an estate of about fifteen hundred acres, which extended from what is now the corner of Central Avenue and Sixty-third Street, northward beyond the canal to within a few hundred yards of the Des Plaines River.²³

Meanwhile, Wentworth had put men to work cutting drainage ditches and fencing several hundred acres for pasture. At the same time, he was beginning to buy from Eastern breeders the Devon and Durham cattle, Southdown and Merino sheep, Suffolk pigs, and varieties of chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys which he needed to start his farm on the grand scale that he had envisaged. "I am going to have something of everything," he confided to David Davis. He asked Davis to help him acquire fifty yearling heifers of the ordinary prairie type to cross with the higher-priced thoroughbreds which he planned to import from the East. "Say nothing that they are for me," he added, taking a boyish pleasure in keeping his whole project a secret until he was fully prepared to launch it.²⁴

By the autumn of 1854 Long John's plans had matured to a point where he needed publicity rather than secrecy, and

readers of the Chicago *Democrat* were introduced to the "Illinois Breeding Association," managed by Mr. Sargent Cook, with headquarters near Summit. Cook was a New Hampshire farmer whom Wentworth had hired to direct his agricultural enterprise, while the "Association" was apparently an unincorporated joint-stock company in which Long John was the principal—if not the only—investor. On May 26, 1855, the *Democrat* proclaimed that the Association had four bulls and six cows of the finest blood ever to reach Illinois. Two weeks later it announced the arrival from New York of six more thoroughbred Durham cows, all in calf by the "Duke of Gloster," the "best bull ever imported to America." Soon the breeding farm would have calves for sale, the newspaper continued, and it was already prepared to accept cows for service at from ten to twenty dollars each. Two bulls and two heifers recently calved at Summit would be exhibited at the forthcoming Chicago State Fair.²⁵

To finance this elaborate new undertaking Wentworth sold many of his scattered acreages north of Chicago and several of his most valuable town lots in the city. He also borrowed approximately \$4,000 from his father, and probably obtained an even larger sum from his father-in-law.²⁶ During the years that followed, a steadily increasing proportion of his wealth was invested in land, animals, and equipment for the Summit estate.

Farmer, editor, and land speculator he might be, but in his heart Long John remained primarily a politician. That his retirement from Congress in 1851 spelled the end of his public career was more a hope than an expectation among his enemies. At thirty-six, he was still too young and ambitious, too hungry for the limelight, to step permanently from the stage of politics. He had, it soon developed, merely withdrawn for the moment to a dressing room for some changes in make-up and costume. With the same vibrant energy and painstaking care that characterized his financial activities in the early 1850's, Wentworth was preparing the ground for a return to public office.

Once again the federal census was shaping his future. The population figures for 1850 revealed that Illinois was thereafter entitled to send two additional men to Congress. In the redistricting that followed, Cook was now placed in a belt of seven counties that extended across the state from Chicago to Rock Island. The more alert politicians in the area soon realized

that Wentworth had designs upon the seat from this new second district. It was admittedly Democratic, but how did Long John now stand with the regular Democratic organization in Illinois? For that matter, how did the Free-Soil Democrats in general stand, after their rebellious behavior in 1848, and their opposition to the Compromise of 1850? Throughout the North, the Democracy was confronted with this problem of how to receive those insurgents who were now ready in large numbers to resume their membership in the party. There was angry disagreement in some states, especially in New York, where the question of granting amnesty to the Van Buren men split the "Hunker" or conservative Democrats into "Hardshells" and "Softshells."

The spokesman in Cook County for a "hard" policy toward free-soilers was Ebenezer Peck, who was motivated largely by his virulent hatred for Wentworth. In the columns of his *Democratic Argus*, Peck repeatedly demanded the expulsion of Long John from the party. The *State Register* vehemently concurred. But the unchallenged leader of Illinois Democrats by this time was Stephen Douglas, and the final decision on the issue rested primarily with him. Over the years the Little Giant's friendship for Wentworth had slowly changed to enmity, and his personal sympathies were undoubtedly with Peck. Yet Douglas was now a contender for the presidential nomination and needed a united party behind him in Illinois. Any attempt to proscribe the Barnburner element and its most prominent member could lead to disaster, for Long John had demonstrated many times his political mastery over the northern counties.²⁷

Douglas was consequently inclined to favor a "soft" policy toward the free-soil faction, and he was encouraged in this attitude by the conciliatory tone of Wentworth's editorials. Although it frankly confessed, in the early months of 1851, that Douglas was by no means its first choice, the *Democrat* also conceded that he would be a strong candidate and promised to support him if he won the nomination. At the same time, Long John pleaded earnestly for a united party in Illinois and seemed willing to assume the role of mediator between the two hostile factions.²⁸

The trend toward a reconciliation reached its first climax on May 22, 1851, when Douglas arrived in Chicago and went immediately into conference with Wentworth.²⁹ Thirteen years had elapsed since their first meeting in the offices of the *Demo-*

crat, when the two eager young politicians had discussed strategy for Douglas' congressional campaign. Now the stakes were larger, and agreement was more difficult. The Little Giant now claimed Chicago as his home, but his political outlook had been shaped during his years in Jacksonville and Springfield. He remained a spokesman for the older Northwest which had been settled from the Ohio River and was substantially Southern in population. Long John, on the other hand, reflected the views of the upper region bordering upon the Great Lakes, with its people of Northeastern origin, its progressive temper, and its antipathy for slavery. These and other contrary influences had pulled the two leaders steadily apart in recent years, but both men were ambitious, both were opportunists, and each had something of value to offer the other.

The words that passed between them at the meeting were not recorded. But from what followed, it is clear that Douglas agreed to throw no barriers across the path of Wentworth's congressional aspirations, while Long John apparently promised to support whatever ticket and platform should emerge from the national convention in 1852, and to promote Douglas' return to the Senate in the event that he failed to secure the presidential nomination. The "softshell" policy had seemingly won. Wayward free-soilers were to be welcomed back into the Democratic fold. The *Democrat* became increasingly cordial toward Douglas, and Wentworth began to map his campaign strategy.³⁰

But Peck and many other Chicago Hunkers were unwilling to accept the truce negotiated with the Barnburners. They remained as relentless as ever in their determination to drive Long John and his friends from the party. It was obvious to everyone that the Cook County convention, meeting on April 13, 1852, would provide the critical test in Wentworth's attempt to regain a seat in Congress. He did not leave such an important battle to lieutenants, but assumed personal command of his forces by attending as a delegate from the third ward.

The enemy's position had already been softened by artillery fire from the *Democrat*, which pleaded for party harmony and proclaimed its opposition to any reopening of the slavery question. On the convention floor Wentworth paraded his new orthodoxy by offering resolutions which endorsed Douglas for president, and pledged support to the platform and nominees of the approaching national convention. His whole performance

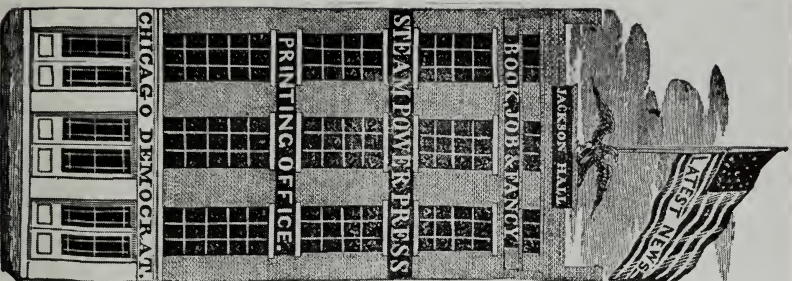
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Chicago Morning Democrat.

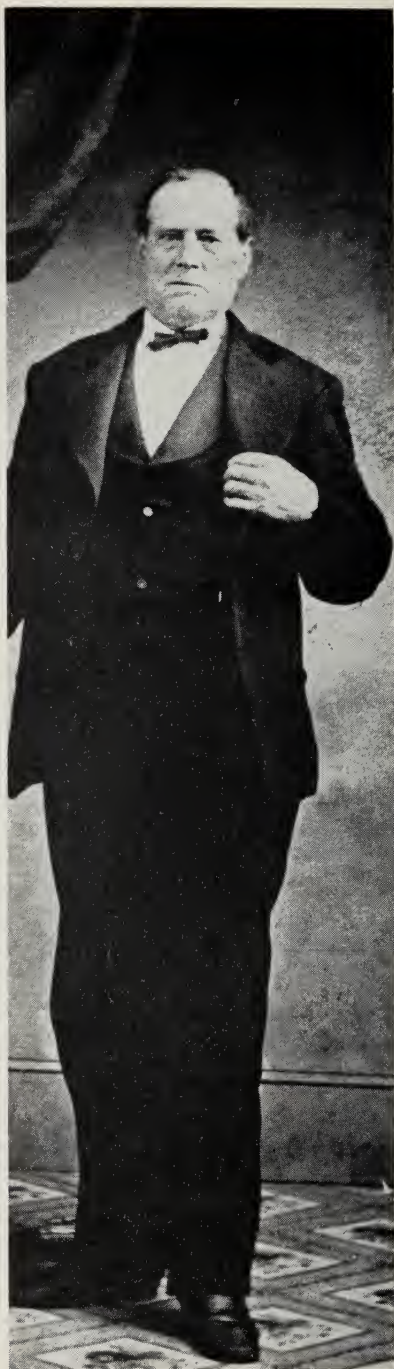
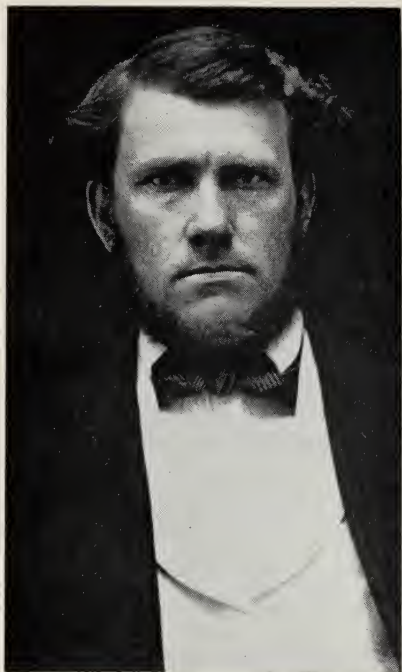
FRIDAY MORNING, JANUARY 1, 1841.



The Colonel,
Mounted on his celebrated war horse Bay Breechit, and his
INAUGURAL ADDRESS.



On the left, Jackson Hall, early home of the *Chicago Democrat*. On the right, Long John pokes fun at Long John, for his appointment as a colonel in the Illinois militia. Courtesy Chicago Historical Society.



Wentworth in the 1840's and 1850's. Courtesy Chicago Historical Society.

was brilliantly executed, and the *Daily Journal* tempered disgust with reluctant admiration in its report:

A prominent feature in these proceedings from beginning to end, was the first appearance of Mr. *Wentworth* again on the stage of political action, and to 'give the devil his due,' it was his sagacity and adroitness alone, that brought about the result as it terminated. . . . It was amusing to notice his long arms once more around the necks of those who for years have openly abused him with every possible epithet, and how complacently they looked up into the Judas face that has so often betrayed them—but there was figuring for the future as well as for the present to be done, and *the tools* were wanted.³¹

So completely did *Wentworth* dominate the meeting that Ebenezer Peck was even excluded from the slate of delegates to the state convention. This was a humiliating blow for Peck, but he traveled grimly to Springfield anyhow, hoping to arouse Democrats from the southern counties against his hated adversary. With his connivance, one delegate introduced a resolution expelling from the convention any person who had opposed the Compromise of 1850, and specifically providing that *Wentworth* should be refused a seat because of his "transgressions and political turpitude." The members of the convention, in no mood for such disruptive tactics, promptly tabled the motion by a large majority. Long John had cleared another hurdle on the road back to Washington.³²

The prevalence of "softshell" attitudes among Illinois Democrats was further demonstrated by the nomination for governor of Joel Matteson, a man of moderate antislavery views who was highly acceptable to *Wentworth*. But the greatest interest in the state centered upon Douglas' bid for the presidency. Throughout the nation devoted friends of the Little Giant were urging his cause vigorously—too vigorously, according to the less devoted but perspicacious *Wentworth*. Several times Long John warned the Illinois senator to restrain his more impetuous supporters and to beware of early promise.³³

It proved to be sound advice. At Baltimore, in the first week of June, Douglas had his hour of surging hope, along with Cass, Marcy, and Buchanan. But the deadlocked convention finally turned on its forty-ninth ballot to Franklin Pierce, the same New Hampshire politician who, at the Dartmouth commence-

ment sixteen years before, had solicited the aid of Paul Wentworth in his campaign for the United States Senate.

Long John accepted the nomination of Isaac Hill's old rival with outward pleasure, and even voiced no objections to a platform which not only renounced all agitation of the slavery question, but also repudiated internal improvements legislation! As for Douglas, the *Democrat* declared that he must be re-elected to the Senate and groomed to succeed Pierce in 1856.³⁴

This new attitude of submissiveness and co-operation was a source of amazement and delight to those party leaders who had come to regard Wentworth as an incorrigible trouble-maker, but it did not mollify his enemies in Chicago. The Peck faction was determined to thwart Long John's ambitions by winning the congressional nomination for saloon-keeping Ike Cook, a former sheriff and favorite crony of Stephen Douglas. The climax of the rancorous contest was reached at the county convention which assembled in August. After officers of the law had been summoned to quell the familiar disturbance over contested seats, Wentworth's supporters quickly seized control and endorsed him for Congress with a special tribute to his "ability, integrity, democracy, and purity of purpose and character." This action was soon duplicated in five of the other six counties, and the district convention at Dixon on September 15 was consequently little more than a formality. Long John was nominated on the first ballot with 65 out of 71 votes.³⁵

Douglas now kept his promise by delivering several campaign speeches for Wentworth, but Peck sullenly spurned "that arrant freesoil demagogue" and once more threw his support to the Whigs. Clearly outnumbered in the district, the Whigs saw in the bitterness that swirled about Wentworth's nomination their best hope of staging an upset. "We are doing our utmost here to defeat Long John Wentworth for Congress," one of their number reported to Hamilton Fish in New York. "He is going to have a close run of it, and I would be sure of his defeat if we had a candidate who had the health & energy to work as any one should work to defeat Long John."³⁶

The Whigs selected the relatively unknown Cyrus Aldrich to oppose Wentworth, and they were troubled by their own internal feud between the triumphant followers of Winfield Scott and the embittered Fillmore-Webster men. Concentrating its efforts upon the congressional race, the *Chicago Journal*

printed and distributed a quantity of Democratic ballots on which the name "Aldrich" was slyly substituted for "Wentworth," a trick popular with both parties in those days of less formal election procedures. It may have cost Long John some votes, for he ran well behind the general party ticket, although he still carried his district with a majority of over a thousand. In the other congressional contests the Whigs were more fortunate, capturing the surprising total of four seats to their opponents' five. But the Democrats again swept the state offices and contributed the Illinois electoral vote to the crushing victory of Franklin Pierce over Winfield Scott.³⁷

Wentworth's first concern after the election was the distribution of federal patronage in northern Illinois. On a quick visit to New Hampshire he discussed the subject with the president-elect and then reported to Douglas: "I told Gen. Pierce that I wanted nothing & that, as to appointments generally in Illinois, I had not the least doubt that you, Shields & I should agree in every instance & so make him no trouble."³⁸

In bracketing himself with the two senators to the exclusion of the four other Democratic congressmen, Long John was obviously laying claim to the position of spokesman for the entire free-soil wing of the party in the state. He boldly listed his preferences for the more important offices at stake in Chicago, offering in return to direct the campaign for Douglas' re-election to the Senate, and to support the Little Giant's friend William Richardson for speaker.³⁹

The new legislature was expected to elect a senator soon after it assembled in January, 1853. Wentworth, back in Chicago, assured Douglas on December 29 that he had given "instructions" to certain legislators upon how to proceed in the party caucuses. "If there is any opposition to this early movement," he added, "I am to be telegraphed & I shall leave at once for Springfield. You cannot be beaten."⁴⁰

Wentworth's estimate of his own importance in the contest was absurdly extravagant. Most Illinois Democrats were firm in their loyalty to Douglas, and his re-election was swiftly achieved under the direction of more reliable lieutenants than the long-legged firebrand from Chicago. Long John's support, at best, merely widened the margin of victory, but he immediately claimed a generous share of the credit and renewed his pressure upon Douglas for a satisfactory agreement regarding the distribution of patronage.

"In my district, I lost but one member of the Legislature," he exulted. "I can do the same for Shields [in 1854], if we three act together in my District, where I am willing to shoulder all responsibilities before God & man." Referring to the recent death of Mrs. Douglas in childbirth, he wrote: "I pity you, amid your severe affliction, in view of the rush for office that is to be made upon you." The remedy was simple. "Let the delegation stand together & sign the whole batch [of recommendations]." ⁴¹

Sinking any personal misgivings in his desire to strengthen the new Democratic unity in Illinois, Douglas acceded to most of Long John's demands. With his endorsement, Wentworth men were named to the offices of receiver, register, collector, and district attorney in Chicago. Douglas balked at surrendering the choice of a postmaster, however, and eventually secured the position for Ike Cook. Long John accepted this lone setback with unusual graciousness, and well he might, for he had clearly triumphed once again over his local enemies. The Cook appointment was an obvious attempt to placate the anti-Wentworth faction in the city, but it was not enough. Snarls of discontent among the Hunkers rose to an angry roar when the post of district attorney was awarded to Thomas Hoyne, who had campaigned for Van Buren in 1848. There were complaints from many embittered Democrats that Douglas was rewarding treachery and punishing loyalty to party principles. ⁴²

His election success, combined with his apparent influence upon both Douglas and the president, raised Wentworth's prestige to new heights during the early months of 1853. A brief visit to Springfield late in January evoked much newspaper comment upon the awesome respect for his political talents that pervaded the state capital. Probably no man in the West had greater notoriety, said the *Alton Courier*. He was the "observed of all observers," the object of almost universal curiosity. "Long John is here," reported the correspondent of the *Missouri Republican*, "and some think the deuce is to pay . . . everybody is awaiting with breathless anxiety the coming of some sad calamity . . . he is a terror to his enemies. A more successful political necromancer is not to be found. . . . You can depend upon it, there is some tall mischief in that tall man." The *St. Louis Intelligencer* declared that "the descent of a hawk among a brood of chickens, the pounce of an eagle upon a flock of feeding doves, never created a greater amount of fright and

flutter than his arrival did among politicians." He was looked upon as "the very incarnation of political intrigue . . . a Democratic Machiavelli," whose chief business was to "roast the rogues of his own party."⁴³

Actually, Wentworth did little in Springfield except sign a petition requesting certain civil rights for the Negro in Illinois—a gesture of reassurance, perhaps, to his antislavery constituents. Then he quietly withdrew, well pleased with the interest that his visit had aroused.

The future must have looked bright to Wentworth as he departed for Washington the following December. He had performed the difficult feat of cementing a new alliance with Douglas and the national Democratic organization, while retaining his popularity in the free-soil counties of northern Illinois. And his new role as a mediator between the two wings of his party seemed to open up a whole new political career, in which the opportunities for advancement were almost unlimited.

Everything depended, of course, upon the continued abatement of the slavery excitement in Congress. Any new explosion from that dangerous volcano, now relatively quiescent, would destroy the delicate political balance which Long John had achieved in Illinois. His hopes and ambitions were now firmly fastened to the no-agitation plank of the Baltimore platform. "It is pretty generally admitted now that there can be no more capital made out of the agitation of the slavery question," he wrote soon after taking his seat in the House. "Never did a Congress organize more harmoniously than the present one."⁴⁴

A peaceful, lackluster session was all that Wentworth asked, and the signs seemed to point in that direction. "The National Capital was never so dull," he announced on December 31. "There is nothing of excitement, nothing of interest, here. . . ."⁴⁵

Four days later, however, Douglas reported his bill for the organization of Nebraska Territory.

CHAPTER VIII

The Reluctant Republican

We Illinois politicians are all covered with corns, & it is hard to tread any where without making some one scream.—*John Wentworth to Mason Brayman, June 30, 1854.*

WASHINGTON HAD GROWN bigger and somewhat tidier in the ten years since John Wentworth's first election to Congress, but new buildings and improved streets had not dispelled the air of incompleteness which Dickens had once described. The squat and unsightly form of the Washington Monument, its construction halted at 150 feet, stood out against the western sky as a conspicuous reminder that the Capital, in 1853, was still an unfinished city.

To men of insight, the monument may also have symbolized the perilous incompleteness of the federal Union itself, for sectional rivalry was still gnawing at the store of buoyant nationalism which had been harvested during the years that followed the second war with Britain. Wentworth's cheerful report that the slavery issue had permanently subsided was more an expression of hope than a statement of fact. Partially concealed beneath a fragile crust of compromise, the deadly process of emotional fermentation continued. Northerners found the Fugitive Slave Act loathsome in operation and viewed Southern designs upon slavery-ridden Cuba with growing apprehension. Southerners watched in alarm as Vermont,

with her personal-liberty legislation, set a pattern for Northern violation of the compromise, and indignant slaveholders violently denounced the picture of their society which the nation was obtaining from the pages of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The Democratic party, having won the presidency and an overwhelming majority in both houses of Congress, seemed a powerful bulwark against the forces of disunion, but it still suffered from the poisonous factionalism that had blighted the term of James K. Polk. The old quarrel in New York between Barnburners and Hunkers had reached a new intensity, and the party was similarly crippled in other states by personal jealousies and snarling disputes over patronage. Even in Illinois, where Douglas and Wentworth had at least patched up a truce between the two main wings of the party, there was much grumbling among individual Democrats.

The motley aggregation which was so loosely and uneasily bound together under the Democratic banner had never more desperately needed a leader of strong will and exalted prestige. But Franklin Pierce, nominated at Baltimore because of the enemies that he had not made, was no such man. Although campaign strategists had wistfully pinned the nickname, "Young Hickory," upon him, nine months of his administration had already convinced many of them that their unobjectionable candidate was a vacillating and ineffectual president.

In the absence of purposeful leadership from the White House, the stubby figure of Stephen A. Douglas became more and more the center of attention in Washington. Fresh from an impressive tour of Europe, still the idol of that exuberant group which called itself "Young America," Douglas surveyed the national scene with restless vision and resolute self-assurance. A bold program for the development of the great West seemed to him an admirable way to rally his floundering party, arouse a new spirit of patriotism in the country, and strengthen his own position for the next presidential contest.

One serious obstacle, however, was the repeated failure of Congress to provide a territorial government for the Nebraska region. All efforts to secure the necessary legislation had been frustrated by sectional rivalry over the choice of a Pacific railroad route, and by Southern reluctance to encourage settlement in an area where slavery was forbidden. Convinced that the deadlock would continue as long as the Missouri Compromise remained in force, Douglas began to argue that the restrictions

of 1820 had been supplanted as public policy by the popular-sovereignty principle of 1850—that the later compromise had, in effect, canceled the earlier one.

The full meaning of his convenient new viewpoint was only gradually acknowledged by the Illinois senator. The bill organizing Nebraska Territory which he reported from committee on January 4, 1854, promised eventual admission to the Union, "with or without slavery," but it said nothing about the status of slavery during the territorial period. This veiled assault upon the Missouri Compromise was immediately denounced throughout the North. Yet it was too halfhearted and ambiguous to satisfy many Southerners. Douglas soon found it advisable to add a section specifically conferring upon the inhabitants of the proposed territory full authority to regulate slavery. Under further prodding he at last followed his own doctrine to its logical conclusion by accepting an amendment which explicitly repealed the Missouri Compromise and erased its historic line of demarcation between slavery and freedom.

When this revised and more drastic version of the bill was reported to the Senate on January 23, the storm of indignation already sweeping through the free states reached its peak of fury. The scorching words used by Salmon P. Chase and his associates in their "Appeal of the Independent Democrats," issued the following day, were but an early articulation of Northern rage at what seemed to be a "criminal betrayal of precious rights" and the "gross violation of a sacred pledge."¹ A last-minute addition to the measure, creating two territories—Kansas and Nebraska—instead of one, only convinced numerous critics that the region directly west of Missouri had been earmarked for slavery. As Douglas, with the assurance of full support from the president, took the floor on January 30 to defend his bill, it was clear to nearly everyone that the makeshift barricade against sectional strife had, after four years, abruptly collapsed.

Although the Senate was for some weeks the actual scene of battle, many members of the lower house felt impelled to state in advance their views upon the Kansas-Nebraska bill. Autumn elections loomed ahead to offset the effects of party discipline among Northern Democrats in the House, and half of them eventually joined the solid bloc of Northern Whigs in an "anti-Nebraska" coalition that was full of meaning for the future.

The gathering forces of opposition included no men more outspoken than the old Wilmot Proviso advocates, who grimly prepared to defend once more the principle of free soil. But one of their number, John Wentworth, sat strangely silent in the midst of the tumult. The swift movement of events left Long John dazed and irresolute. Having returned to Washington with the hope that the new Congress would be confronted by nothing more provocative than homestead legislation or a Pacific railroad bill, he found himself thrust almost immediately into a familiar dilemma: when slavery was the issue, he could not satisfactorily serve both the Democratic party and his constituents in northern Illinois.

In Chicago, where the repeated frustration of various Western aspirations had already prepared the ground for political revolt, there was a violent reaction to the Kansas-Nebraska bill. Not one of the city's newspapers supported the Douglas proposal. Scores of leading Democrats—including Peck and the disgruntled Hunker faction which had once denounced Wentworth for his free-soil attitudes—were joining the Whigs in demonstrations of protest. The clamor from home merely reinforced Long John's own personal convictions. His vote against the measure was inevitable. But it promised to disrupt his new alliance with Douglas and derange his ambitious plans for the years ahead. He had no desire to hasten the disagreeable day of collision with the Little Giant. There was always the chance that it might somehow be averted. "You talk about my course on Nebraska," he wrote to a friend in February.

Be aware, my dear sir, that I am not in the Senate, where, I have no doubt, my friends would like to see me. When the Nebraska bill comes to the House, we hope to make quick work with it. I have to use our Senators too often to quarrel with them unnecessarily. But, when responsibilities legitimately devolve on me, I am not the man you voted for if I do not meet them as becomes a Representative of my people.²

So Wentworth held his tongue and waited. The *Democrat* commented ruefully upon the renewal of the slavery excitement, but then turned to other subjects. If a subscriber had depended solely upon its columns for enlightenment during the spring of 1854, he might have concluded that the great political issue of the hour was either free homesteads for settlers or pensions for veterans of the War of 1812. Rival editors condemned

this "timid, sneaking course," and challenged Wentworth to "speak out." Not a newspaper in the North, sneered the *Journal*, had "failed to take an open and decided stand upon the Nebraska bills either for or against save the *Chicago Democrat*." ³

Evasive silence was difficult enough in the face of such reproaches. It became impossible when the Senate, early in the morning of March 4, 1854, passed the Kansas-Nebraska bill. Now, at last, the *Democrat* spoke out, but in words chosen with painful care. Since the expansion of slavery had been halted, said the editorial, by "Legislative enactments where it could go, and by the hand of God in the balance of our Territories," the paper had "ceased to advocate its peculiar views under the general acquiescence of the whole democratic party." But Douglas now proposed to make popular sovereignty universal by "repealing the Wilmot Proviso north of the Mo. Compromise line." The *Democrat* had always differed with the "distinguished Senator" on this question, and it clung to the hope that if the Compromise of 1850 was to be disturbed, the change would be "in favor of the ground we have taken rather than his." Nevertheless, the paper was printing the final speeches of both Douglas and Charles Sumner from the senatorial debates, in order to show "fair play." ⁴

Although this mild remonstrance was greeted with scorn by many opponents of the bill, it was enough to irritate Douglas, who had resolved to make his measure a test of party loyalty. Thomas Hoyne hastened to assure the strong-willed senator that he still had a true friend in Wentworth, but the latter's position grew more delicate with each passing day. The struggle had now shifted to the floor of the House, where antislavery strength was heavily concentrated, and the administration was intensifying its pressure upon wavering Democrats in an effort to build up a majority favorable to passage. In the two bitter months that followed, an avalanche of speeches fell upon the chamber, but none of them issued from Wentworth's lips. "I have not taken any hand in this fight yet, and do not intend to," he announced early in April. "I stand upon the Baltimore Platform, and you know what that said upon the subject of slavery agitation." ⁵

Long John abided rigorously by this pledge. The *Congressional Globe* records not a single word from him on the merits of the Kansas-Nebraska bill. At only one point in the debates did his repressed indignation burst forth into the open. Old

Thomas Hart Benton, now serving in the House, after having lost the seat he held for thirty years in the Senate, had been cut off by the hour rule before reaching the end of a prepared speech against the Kansas measure. Wentworth obtained the floor and then asked unanimous consent to yield a portion of his time to the man who had been one of his boyhood idols, but a few Southern congressmen ungraciously objected. Long John angrily rebuked this display of rudeness to "the oldest man living in Congress." Let it go out to the country, he added, "as a sample of the courtesy of those who are trying to control this House." The wrangling continued for several hours, with Wentworth resolutely holding his right to the floor. Finally, by a clever parliamentary maneuver he forced his opponents to give up the fight, and Benton was allowed to resume his speech at the word "amphibiology," where he had been interrupted. According to Wentworth's *Congressional Reminiscences*, Douglas, who had witnessed the incident from the lobby, came to his seat afterwards and remarked: "The Abolitionists are quite successful under you as their new leader."⁶

Wentworth's attitude was also stiffened by a clause in the Senate bill which limited the right of suffrage in Nebraska and Kansas to citizens of the United States. Long John had no sympathy for nativism, and he denounced this manifestation of it as an odious discrimination. But he also saw the provision as part of a slaveholders' plot to exclude foreigners from the new territories in order to make way for their slaves. "Southern politicians," he asserted, "are getting to be just about as much afraid of the great rush of foreign laborers to this country as they are of the Wilmot Proviso."⁷

By May 22, the day of decision in the House, it was apparent that the administration had enough votes to win. Long John was present continuously during the closing hours of the long struggle, and he invariably supported the opposition in its desperate efforts to postpone action. But William Richardson, the able leader of the Douglas men, drove relentlessly to his goal. Late in the evening, by a vote of 113 to 100, the House passed the Kansas-Nebraska bill.⁸

There was one consolation for Wentworth, however. In the final draft of the measure, the anti-foreigner clause was deleted, and the Senate accepted the revision three days later. This was "indeed a great triumph," he asserted. "It is pretty safe now to say that slaves cannot go to Kansas or Nebraska."⁹

The evidence clearly indicates that Wentworth had no desire to repudiate his understanding with Douglas or to bolt the Democratic party over the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. In sharp contrast to the angry outbursts in most anti-Nebraska newspapers, the comments of the *Chicago Democrat* upon the success of the Kansas-Nebraska bill were temperate and optimistic. Conceding that a "great work of mischief" had been done—one which had a "tendency to sectional alienation"—its editors nevertheless maintained that no dangerous consequences would follow, that the "amicable relations" between North and South would not be disturbed. "There is patriotism enough in the American people," said one editorial, "to fully counteract its evil effects."¹⁰

Even these words were too vigorous for Long John, who was nervously appraising the reaction of party leaders to his adverse vote. In an agitated letter to Mason Brayman on June 30, he gave instructions for the conduct of the *Democrat*:

I wish you would see your brother as soon as convenient & tell him to leave the whole negro & slavery question, direct & indirect, to me. You know how difficult a question this is to manage, & Bradley & a few others think Chicago is the whole State, & the sentiments of Chicago should be respected. Bradley writes me in great difference from me &, although I have been writing him to leave the matter entirely to me, he thinks I do not know public sentiment, etc. . . . Why, in my own District, the democrats are as wide apart as the poles, & what will get me votes in Cook will kill me in Rock Island. . . . In trying to kill Douglas, some of my indiscreet friends will bury me ten feet under ground.¹¹

Wentworth's caution was motivated not only by consideration for his own political future, but by a desire to minimize the new rift in the Democratic party. He saw disaster ahead if the slavery excitement continued. Anti-Nebraska Democrats, he thought, should make the best of defeat without agitating the issue further; supporters of the Kansas-Nebraska Act should be magnanimous in victory. The party, in other words, must return at once to the safety of the Baltimore platform and let bygones be bygones.

It is more than possible that Wentworth spoke his mind to Douglas, warning him against the vindictive policy of making devotion to popular sovereignty a supreme test of party loyalty. If so, he was completely unpersuasive. Furious at the savage

abuse heaped upon him by so many free-soil Democrats, Douglas was in no mood to pursue any longer his "softshell" tactics of the previous year. His anger had crystallized in a grim determination to purge the Democratic party of all "abolitionists" like John Wentworth.

One of the irate senator's most pressing needs was a friendly newspaper in Chicago. During July and August, with financial aid from Ike Cook, he established the *Daily Times* as his personal organ in the city and threw the full weight of federal patronage to its support. Postmasters were expected to promote circulation of the new journal at the expense of its rivals. Dismissal awaited those who refused to co-operate. By autumn the *Democrat* had plainly lost its privileged position among the newspapers of northern Illinois.¹²

Long John was slow either to realize or to acknowledge that he had been marked for destruction. He continued to plead for a party unity based upon toleration, but the trend of events gave his words a hollow sound. On other issues besides slavery, Douglas seemed to be courting the South and snubbing the West. When the Senate rejected homestead legislation in favor of a less comprehensive graduation bill, he declared himself "perfectly satisfied" with the substitution. After years of supporting internal improvements, he suddenly denounced the system of federal appropriations as "a total failure," and voted against a rivers-and-harbors bill which Wentworth had laboriously promoted in the lower house. The measure passed the Senate anyhow, only to be vetoed by President Pierce, who acted, it was reported, under Douglas' influence.¹³

Wentworth was apparently willing to endure even these bitter disappointments, for the *Democrat* commented upon them with remarkable restraint, blaming the South rather than the administration. But he could not much longer ignore the unconcealed preparations to drive him from his seat in Congress. "Douglas has gone to Chicago," readers of the *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser* were informed early in September, "full of indignation and resentment against Wentworth and determined to prevent his return if possible. He imputes to W. much of the existing difficulty between himself and the people of Illinois—and will make a desperate effort to punish the member therefor." The senator's temper was not improved when an angry mob of Chicagoans shouted him down as he tried to speak in defense of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. If he held cer-

tain other "abolitionist" editors in the city more directly responsible for the outrage than the proprietor of the *Democrat*, still Long John was the only one among them inflicting his presence upon the House of Representatives. "Make war on Wentworth every good chance you get," Douglas instructed the editor of the *Times*, "for I shall attack him openly . . . in his district. He must be beaten at all hazards."¹⁴

To be opposed for re-nomination by leaders of his own party was nothing new for Wentworth. Yet there was no precedent in his experience for the political chaos that confronted him in 1854. The Whig party remained sturdier than in many other states, but its disintegration had begun, and the concurrent rise of the temperance and Know-Nothing movements had thrown Illinois politics into a turmoil even before the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. The Nebraska issue, although it was potentially the key to a realignment of political forces in the United States, at first only added to the confusion. Nativists began to quarrel with each other over the slavery question, and the solid Democratic front which the foreign born had long presented was suddenly shattered. The movement toward a "fusion" of all anti-Nebraska men, whatever their antecedents, was attracting a conglomeration of Germans and Know-Nothings, Whigs, Democrats, and Abolitionists, whose single bond of union seemed hardly strong enough to bear the strain of their mutual antipathies.

To fusionists in the Chicago district, Wentworth was an added complication. Some thought he deserved re-election, but many more were impatient with his halfhearted opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act and suspicious that he might still come to terms with Douglas. The latter view prevailed, and fusion leaders entered into an agreement with the regular Whig organization for the purpose of defeating Long John. Both parties held their conventions in Aurora on September 20, but the plan to unite upon a single candidate miscarried. The "People's Convention" nominated James Woodworth, a free-soil Democrat and former mayor of Chicago, while the Whigs chose Robert Blackwell.¹⁵

According to the editors of the *Journal*, Wentworth's sinister influence was responsible for the failure of the fusionists to name a Whig. Long John was even rumored to have attended the Aurora convention in disguise! Whether true or not, whatever advantage he may have gained by this division

of his adversaries was offset by ruinous dissension among Democrats. A split between the Wentworth and Douglas factions seemed inevitable, but when it became apparent that he must also face vigorous opposition from some of the anti-Nebraska men who had remained in the party, Long John decided that it was time to retire from the contest. In his published letter of withdrawal, he offered the ingenious explanation that his nomination was assured, but that it might hurt Douglas' chances for the presidency. More sincere was his hint that he was available for a higher office, perhaps a seat in the United States Senate: "Should any over-anxious friend of mine endeavor to use my name in connection with a more extended constituency, I have given him no ground to recommend me upon principles which imply any neglect of the interests or betrayal of the trusts of the People I have the honor to represent."¹⁶

Any hope that Long John's "sacrifice" had cleared the way for Democratic unity was dispelled on October 3 when the district convention at Aurora broke up into two hostile groups. The friends of Douglas and popular sovereignty selected John B. Turner, president of the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad, as their candidate for Congress. The other faction nominated Edward Mayo of DeKalb on a platform repudiating all slavery agitation. Although the *Democrat* officially endorsed Mayo, there were reports that Wentworth was actually throwing his support to the fusionists, and the election results suggest that he may well have done so. Mayo finished a poor fourth, while Woodworth received more votes than his three opponents combined. "Wentworth-ism seems once more rampant in the District," grumbled the *Journal*. "Letters from friends in the interior advise us that his postmasters were the most active electioneers for Woodworth at the polls yesterday, and that Mayo's whole strength was cast for him."¹⁷

Long John was more bewildered than elated, however, by the fusion victory in Illinois, which captured control of the legislature and swept five anti-Nebraskans into Congress. The triumph of free-soil principles, as well as a gratifying rebuke to Douglas, could be read from the election results. But the banner of Democracy had been trampled in defeat, and for Wentworth personally, the upheaval in politics had been disastrous. Gloom dripped from the post-election editorials of the *Democrat*, which charged that Douglas had almost destroyed the

Democratic party in the North and shown himself to be "too imprudent a man for a party leader." The results of the senator's own campaign efforts in northern Illinois were caustically summarized:

Very Flattering

In every county where Judge Douglas made a speech, the Democratic party has been signally routed.

"We must go back to the policy of Jefferson and Jackson," the paper admonished, "or such defeats will constantly attend us."¹⁸

Although Wentworth still claimed to be a Democrat as the year 1854 drew to a close, his sympathies obviously lay with the new coalition that called itself by various names, including "Republican." The conflict in his mind between party loyalty and personal conviction was well illustrated by his equivocal attitude toward the approaching senatorial contest. The Whigs, who dominated the fusion majority in the new legislature, had fixed upon Abraham Lincoln as their candidate to succeed James Shields, but they could not win without help from the anti-Nebraska Democrats. Lincoln confided to Congressman Elihu Washburne that he was especially worried about the intentions of legislators from the Chicago area. "Wentworth has a knack of knowing things better than most men," he added. "I wish you would pump him, and write me what you get from him." Washburne replied that during the journey back to Washington, Long John had predicted Lincoln's election. And David Davis thought the "tone" of his editorials was encouraging.¹⁹

At the same time, however, the *Democrat* displayed a surprising cordiality toward Shields. "Save upon the Nebraska bill, we believe, his entire course meets with the approbation of all true democrats," it declared, neglecting to add that the recent election had been generally regarded as a test of public sentiment upon that very exception.²⁰

The legislature began its balloting on February 8, and it was soon apparent that neither of the two leading candidates could win. Lincoln's election was prevented by a handful of anti-Nebraska Democrats—including Norman Judd of Chicago—who stubbornly voted for Lyman Trumbull instead. When the Douglas men, in an attempt to lure the independent votes, suddenly shifted from Shields to the popular Governor Matte-

son, Lincoln had little choice but to throw his support to Trumbull, who was elected on the tenth ballot.

The *Democrat* shed no tears for Lincoln. It applauded the choice of Trumbull, an anti-Nebraska Democrat, and an "able man" who would "make his mark in the senate." Yet the paper also commiserated with Shields, who, it said, had been "betrayed" by Douglas.²¹ This wavering attitude may have reflected Long John's own disappointed hopes concerning the senatorship, but it was primarily a manifestation of the painful ambivalence with which he now regarded the Democratic party.

The prudent years had ended in humiliating personal defeat for Wentworth. He was once more an insurgent, at war with the administration, violent in his denunciation of the South, and consumed with a vengeful hatred for Douglas, the author of all his troubles. But he still considered himself a true disciple of Andrew Jackson. Again, as in 1848, he wished to purify his party rather than abandon it. The "sacred and venerable name of Democracy" was being used "as a cloak to cover up things hideous and revolting," he warned. "This tendency to pervert the Democratic organization demands at the hands of all who truly love and cherish its glorious memories and accomplishments in the past . . . vigilance, and activity and integrity, in order to counteract the machinations of the traitors."²²

Far from being unusual, such views were shared by many other leaders among the anti-Nebraska Democrats, for professional politicians were proving more reluctant than the people to repudiate their old party loyalties. Lieutenant-Governor Gustave Koerner, who had led the German revolt against the Kansas-Nebraska bill in Illinois, insisted that he would remain a Democrat until the party had officially embraced popular sovereignty in its national convention. John M. Palmer, the man most responsible for Trumbull's election, expected Democrats to reunite when the slavery excitement had subsided. Meanwhile, he claimed the right, "inside of party lines, to act according to the dictates of [his] own sense of personal duty." As for the fusion movement, these men looked upon it as a temporary combination whose reason for existence would evaporate when the territorial question was settled.²³

But events on the western plains had already begun to transform the loose anti-Nebraska coalition into something

more substantial and durable. In the early months of 1855, as Long John sat through his final session of Congress, the North was tasting the first fruits of popular sovereignty and finding them unbearably bitter. The struggle for Kansas had begun. Eli Thayer's Emigrant Aid Society had dispatched scores of New England settlers to the territory, thereby exciting indignation and alarm among the residents of western Missouri at the prospect of an "abolitionist" stronghold on their border. When the first elections were held in Kansas, troops of armed Missourians descended upon the polling places to cast illegal votes for candidates friendly to slavery. By the end of March, the territory had a proslavery delegate in Congress, a proslavery legislature, and a federal governor apparently cowed into acceptance of the election frauds.

The *Democrat* joined vigorously in the noisy protest of Northern free-soil newspapers at the exploits of the "Border Ruffians." The understanding that Kansas was to be a slave state, implicit in the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, was now being carried out, it charged. The "clanking of chains" could already be heard, and the "slave driver's whip" was in every settler's hand. "Kansas, beautiful Kansas! Once free, but now doomed by Douglas to eternal servitude, cursed in all time to come with the sighs, tears, groans and agonies of an oppressed population."²⁴

But those who conceded Kansas to slavery in 1855 underestimated the antislavery portion of its population. The free-state forces boldly repudiated the territorial legislature and organized their own extra-legal government, complete with militia, in utter defiance of the Pierce administration. Tension mounted in the border settlements as arms and men poured in to reinforce both sides. By the year's end the stage was set for actors like John Brown.

Wentworth watched the gathering clouds from his desk in Jackson Hall. Between trips of inspection to his Summit farm, he contributed his full share to the torrent of editorial venom that poured from the nation's press on the subject of Kansas. The *Democrat* pictured the proslavery faction in the territory as a horde of vicious criminals. It berated Pierce and his advisers for encouraging the "Border Ruffians" by such acts as the removal of Governor Andrew Reeder when he began to quarrel with the territorial legislature. It exhorted Northerners to emigrate to Kansas, warning them that they must go well

armed and prepared "to protect themselves from the inroads of the savages, whether from Missouri or the Plains." And it threw down the gage to the offending South: "The time has now come when the North can no longer surrender, and, as to compromise, since the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, she has no faith in them. . . . We want no more slave territory! No more! Not an inch!"²⁵

These were clearly the doctrines of the emerging Republican party, but when the discussion shifted from issues to organizations, Long John's words lost some of their radical flavor. "We want no new party—no new names," he insisted. "We want an old party—a party that hung nullifiers and disunionists—the party of Andrew Jackson." Republicanism, he maintained, was but the antislavery branch of Whiggery, too closely tied to Know-Nothingism, the Maine Law, and Horace Greeley to command universal respect in the North. He urged the fusionists to adopt some innocuous name like "Anti-Slavery-Extension Party," so that Democrats in the movement might preserve their separate identity and avoid being "oversloughed in the great mass of Whigs." When the slavery problem was solved, there would be a general return to old party affiliations, and Wentworth, in anticipation of that day, was unwilling to surrender irrevocably "the name or the principles of a Democrat."²⁶

In the early months of 1856, with Kansas on the verge of civil war and the presidential campaign looming ahead, many anti-Nebraska Democrats found themselves in the same anomalous position. Like Wentworth, William Bissell and John M. Palmer clung to a faint hope that the national convention at Cincinnati would nominate a candidate acceptable to them. And although Lyman Trumbull was reconciled to supporting the Republican nominee, an objectionable choice like Seward or Fillmore would compel him to "follow a masterly inactivity."²⁷

With the political picture further confused by the Know-Nothing movement and the last desperate efforts to sustain the Whig party, there seemed to be good reason for delaying one's final decision as long as possible. Wentworth therefore declined to attend the historic meeting of Illinois editors at Decatur on February 22, 1856, when plans were laid for a state convention of anti-Nebraska forces to be held in May. He "approved the object" of the conference, but considered it premature. "When

all parties shall have had time to put forth their platforms," said the *Democrat*, "it will be time for people to . . . consider what steps may be necessary."²⁸

Between February and May, however, Long John's reluctance crumbled under the pressure of events. Every day brought fresh evidence that popular sovereignty would soon receive the official blessing of the Democratic party. In Illinois there was no longer any doubt after May 1, when the Democrats selected as their candidate for governor William Richardson, champion of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in the House of Representatives. Meanwhile, disaster at the polls had awakened anti-Nebraska leaders of Chicago to the hazards of inadequate organization. Early in March, the Douglas Democrats had taken advantage of dissension among their opponents to elect Thomas Dyer as mayor, and the victory was immediately hailed throughout the country as an endorsement of the Pierce administration in one of the strongholds of free soil.

The dismayed antislavery forces in the city were spurred to more strenuous efforts by their defeat, and Long John was at last convinced that the time for decisive action had arrived. When a county anti-Nebraska convention assembled on May 23, he dominated the proceedings, and was one of seventeen delegates chosen to attend the state convention at Bloomington a week later.²⁹

It was a multifarious but highly talented group which gathered in Major's Hall at Bloomington on May 29, 1856. The list of delegates was studded with names like Richard Yates, Orville Browning, Joseph Medill, Richard Oglesby—men who would play leading roles in Illinois politics for the next two decades. Palmer had decided to attend, and his presence so pleased the convention that it called him forward to preside. Even more reassuring to Wentworth and other Democrats was the nomination of Bissell for governor.

Set against the emotional background of nationwide reaction to the recent "sack" of Lawrence and the caning of Charles Sumner by Preston Brooks of South Carolina, the meeting was infected with a feverish sense of urgency and dedication. The climax of excitement came with a stirring speech by Abraham Lincoln—regrettably unrecorded for posterity—which evoked a final surge of enthusiasm and completed the fusion of diverse elements into a powerful political organization.

Wentworth had arrived in Bloomington a day early to take

part in the preliminary planning and oratory. He was appointed to the committee on nominations. And later, he secured unanimous approval of a resolution calling for strict economy in the state government. His active role in the convention earned him a place among the "founders of the Republican Party" in Illinois.³⁰

But Long John laid no claim to the honor in the summer of 1856. "John Wentworth roars like a bull whenever the republican party is mentioned and swears that he's a democrat," reported the future Chief Justice, Melville Fuller, on July 22. Even as he planned a strenuous schedule of campaign speeches for John C. Frémont, nominated for the presidency by the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia in July, Wentworth continued to argue about nomenclature. He still defined "Republican" as the "name generally used to designate a Whig of Know Nothing and Maine Law proclivities."

We are sick of this continual cry, when a Democrat distinguishes himself for Fremont and Dayton, that he has come out and joined the Republican party. He has done no such thing. He is as much of a Democrat as ever he was, and proves himself worthy of the great apostle of Democracy, Thomas Jefferson. . . . If our ticket gets beaten in some of the Western states, it will be solely because the Republican party *has a past* which many Democrats and many Whigs and many no party men will never endorse.³¹

This one quirk did not noticeably reduce his general enthusiasm for the "Anti-Slavery-Extension" cause, however. Besieged with invitations to speak at Republican rallies, he stumped northern Illinois and parts of Iowa throughout the summer and fall, frequently sharing the platform with Lincoln. At a mass meeting in Oregon on August 16, with the entire population of Ogle County seemingly assembled, the two tall ex-congressmen amused themselves during the festivities by counting the number of babies nursing in their mothers' arms. Lincoln tallied seventy-one, Wentworth, seventy-three. Such people, Long John commented, had no reason to support a "superannuated old bachelor" like James Buchanan. "And if their fathers do their duty," he added, "some of the little fellows will live to see the day when not a slave will curse the American soil; and may God hurry up the day by every constitutional means."³²

Finding wherever he went a strong current of resentment

running against the Democratic administration, Wentworth was "sanguine of success," but the election returns in November only partially justified his optimism. An overwhelming Republican vote in the northern counties swept Bissell and the Republican state ticket to victory. In the presidential contest, however, Millard Fillmore and the American party diverted enough Whigs from Frémont to give the Illinois electoral vote to Buchanan. Although the Democrats carried only four other free states in the Union, that was more than they needed to win.

The Republicans were disappointed but not discouraged by the results, for in the pattern of voting they could read the promise of eventual triumph. They had shown amazing strength in those parts of the country whose populations were growing the most rapidly, and they emerged from the election with greater unity and confidence than ever. The battle, said the *Democrat*, was just beginning. "The great issue between freedom and slavery has been made; and, although the latter has triumphed now, yet a work has been begun in the minds of the people which will go forward until truth, and right, and justice, and liberty shall again be in the ascendancy—until the rights of the white race to the Territories shall be secured."³³

For many weeks after the election, Wentworth obstinately persisted in his refusal to call himself a Republican. Still opposed to a high tariff, still an "unalterable foe of a National Bank," he feared Whig domination of the new party. At the same time, he was reluctant to surrender the glorious name of "Democrat" to men like Buchanan, Douglas, and Jefferson Davis. But he could offer no better alternative than "the Frémonters" to describe an organization which had just elected a governor in Illinois and might soon elect a president. Standing now almost alone in his futile battle, he could not much longer deny the indubitable fact that the anti-Nebraska coalition had become the Republican party. In northern Illinois, it would soon be suicidal for a politician to do so.

It was ambition that overcame Long John's misgivings and produced his final conversion. During the previous summer, he had renounced all interest in returning to Congress, but the annual city election was now approaching, and he wanted to be the next mayor of Chicago. By the end of January, therefore, the *Democrat* was slipping in references to the "new or Republican Democracy," and to the "great democratic repub-

lican party." From there, it was an easy step to writing "Republican" without modifiers.³⁴

During this time, Wentworth was preparing for the mayoral contest with his usual thoroughness and energy. "The drunken revelries in which for several nights he has indulged in low brothels and in large saloons, leave no doubt that he has commenced campaigning," snorted the *Times*. Republican leaders were also unhappy—but resigned. "We shall nominate 'Long John' this afternoon for Mayor—and I think elect him," one man wrote to Trumbull. "It is rather a bitter pill for some of us to swallow—but on the whole it is the best we can do."³⁵

So well had Wentworth and his lieutenants set the stage, that when the Republican convention assembled on February 28, 1857, it nominated him by acclamation. Rival editors in the city were less than enthusiastic. "Whatever objections there may be to any other candidate, there can be none to the gentlemen put in nomination for Aldermen," the *Journal* sourly remarked. "Caves In," said the *Tribune*. "For the first time Mr. Wentworth acknowledged on Saturday night, that he belonged to the *Republican* party."³⁶

But widespread dissatisfaction with the first name on their ticket did not diminish the vigor of Republican efforts in the brief campaign, for more was at stake than the redemption of Chicago. With Buchanan about to be inaugurated, and the Supreme Court preparing to hand down its decision in the Dred Scott case, it was a dramatic moment for the first important election in a critical state since the presidential contest. The eyes of the nation were upon the voters of the city as they went to the polls on March 3. Charges of fraud flew back and forth, and violence broke out in several wards. But when the returns were all in, Wentworth had defeated his Democratic opponent by over a thousand votes, to become the first Republican mayor of Chicago.³⁷

CHAPTER IX

Mayor and Marplot

Verily, John Wentworth tyrannizes over Chicago as he likes. The people of that city, and especially the Black Republicans, are completely under his subjection.—JOLIET SIGNAL, *March 9, 1858.*

IN THE SPRING OF 1837, the lanky boy-editor of the Chicago *Democrat* had cast one of the votes which elected the city's first mayor. Now, twenty years older and more than a hundred pounds heavier, he had become the sixteenth man to occupy that office. Many Chicagoans watched with deep misgivings as the oath was administered to John Wentworth, but in one expectation his friends and enemies were agreed. His administration might be good or bad, but they all knew that it would never be dull.

Not in all his years as a congressman had Long John been given such opportunity to indulge his taste for authority and display. The sound of a gavel held in his own hand was delightful to his ears, and he loved to dispatch some subordinate on the run to do his bidding, or to issue a peremptory manifesto which would set the city buzzing with comment. Even the ordeal of apportioning the patronage was for him an exhilarating exercise. Standing beside his desk to receive the steady stream of importunate humanity, he would say: "Well, Michael, what is it? oh, I see, want to be on police. All full, sir,

but we will file your application. Well, sir, what do you want? bell-ringer, eh? Too late, John, got applicants enough to man every tea bell in the city. Well, sir? Bridge tender, eh? Lame? We'll file your application, no vacancy, however. . . ." ¹

In an inaugural address which was "marked in spots with a piety as refreshing as unexpected," the new mayor had announced that his administration would follow a policy of "retrenchment and reform." ² He soon demonstrated, in his own unconventional way, that the pledge was no empty gesture.

Just north of the Chicago River was an area known as the "Sands," covered with the shacks of squatters and thickly infested with lawbreakers and other rogues who had resisted every previous effort to evict them. On April 20, 1857, Long John descended upon the disreputable district with a squad of police and sheriff's deputies. While the angry inhabitants shouted their protests, and a crowd of spectators applauded the show, drag ropes were attached, and about ten of the ramshackle dwellings tumbled to the ground. The effectiveness of this drastic warning was immediately apparent in the hasty preparations for departure throughout the shantytown suburb. "The 'Sands,' as an institution more famous than estimable, are 'fast running out,'" observed the *Democratic Press*.³

The raid attracted much favorable comment in newspapers across the country, but in the end it yielded most dubious benefits, for the wretched denizens of the "Sands" were merely driven into other parts of the city. Such exploits could only scratch the surface of the complex problems which confronted a metropolis emerging almost too rapidly from its rural past.

Chicago, in 1857, was literally lifting herself from the mud in which Wentworth had found her two decades before. To secure adequate drainage and prepare the way for a new sewerage system, a series of higher street grades had been established for the city in recent years. As the lower areas were filled in with earth, property owners were compelled to raise their buildings or see their first floors become basements, and visitors were soon treated to the strange sight of a whole city jacking itself up to a higher level.

A freshet which flooded many parts of Chicago only a few weeks before he took office may have influenced Wentworth to endorse the proposal that the grade be raised another three or four feet. Strong opposition quickly developed among businessmen, and the *Tribune* flatly predicted that the new plan would

cost property owners two million dollars if it were adopted. On May 4, 1857, the Common Council brought the public debate to an end by passing a compromise ordinance which applied only to the area south of Madison Street, where the grade was to be raised an average of approximately two feet.⁴

The physical task of lifting Chicago from the mire required several years to accomplish. The most remarkable achievement was the elevation of the Tremont House—the five-story brick hotel where Wentworth lived—by hundreds of workmen operating five thousand screws, while the occupants pursued their normal routines undisturbed.⁵ Long John not only supervised the raising of his own Jackson Hall, but he wandered about the city watching similar operations and ordering owners to post bond if he saw any possible danger to passers-by. Less popular at the time than his colorful raid upon the “Sands,” Wentworth’s support of a higher grade was a more enduring contribution to the welfare of Chicago.

Not that he was always in step with urban progress. He had fought the creation of a municipal water system and regarded the city hospital, completed during his term, as a waste of money. Although willing to concede the obvious need for additional bridges across the Chicago River, street improvements, and more schools, he preferred, wherever possible, a cautious program which would not enlarge the city’s debt.

Irritated by financial commitments inherited from previous administrations which impeded his crusade for “retrenchment,” Wentworth urged amendments to the city charter prohibiting “the borrowing of money for municipal purposes, other than for the Sewerage and Water Commissioners,” and rendering “all appropriations of money void, unless there is money in the Treasury at the time of voting them.” Such limitations were necessary, he argued, in order to “protect the taxpayers of the city from the army of taxeaters, who will tax the people to the utmost limit and then borrow all they can besides.”⁶

His growing wealth in real estate had made Long John acutely sensitive to taxes, but mounting public indebtedness was even more abhorrent to him. He therefore gave his approval to a sharp increase in the tax rate, which enabled him to administer the government of Chicago without a deficit during his term in office, and even to reduce the total municipal debt by a slight amount. In a bold demonstration of his views on public finance, he arbitrarily burned \$96,000 worth of long-

term bonds which had been issued by the council. This prevented any increase in the bonded debt of the city during his term, but critics insisted that the bonds should have been sold to fund a portion of the large and troublesome floating debt, which cost a higher rate of interest.⁷

The financial problems of Chicago were further complicated by the return of hard times. The Panic of 1857 hit the city with full force in the autumn, closing banks and causing over one hundred local business failures before the end of the year. Although it made the collection of taxes more difficult, the economic distress did reinforce Long John's opposition to any large appropriations for new projects, and it furnished additional justification for the numerous small economies which he introduced. He cut the number of persons on the municipal payroll. He eliminated many constables' fees by transferring their duties to salaried policemen. With the *Democrat* ineligible for appointment as corporation newspaper, he did not hesitate to obtain a severe reduction in the rates for city printing. And he doubled the revenue from licenses by reversing the laxity of previous administrations toward saloons, billiard halls, and bowling alleys.⁸

In his zeal for frugality, Wentworth attempted at first to protect the citizenry of Chicago with a police force of only seventy-five men, but he was soon compelled to increase the number. An epidemic of burglaries which the police seemed unable to check caused widespread alarm, and by the end of June, the *Tribune* was charging that the city had been "delivered over into the keeping of thieves and house breakers." Long John responded by hiring more men, and by ordering the arrest of all persons found on the streets after midnight who could not satisfactorily account for themselves. The first victims of this edict were three private detectives employed by a group of merchants to guard the block in which their establishments were located.⁹

At times Wentworth seemed more interested in harassing prostitutes, blacklegs, and even law-abiding citizens, than in catching felons. With the vigor first displayed in their attack upon the "Sands," the police struck repeatedly at gambling dens and brothels. "His Lengthiness, the Mayor," led some of the raids in person and often supervised the booking and jailing of prisoners. In one indignant outburst he so manhandled an attorney trying to confer with two gamblers in the watch

house, that he was haled into court on assault charges and fined twenty-five dollars.¹⁰

Respectable members of society who applauded his valiant crusade against immorality were outraged when Long John's iron hand fell upon them. To remedy the cluttered conditions of sidewalks in the business district, the council, in May, had passed an ordinance strictly regulating the amount of space that could be occupied by merchandise and overhanging signs. But the merchants had shown little inclination to comply. So at one o'clock in the morning of June 19, the mayor ordered his police into action, and the sun rose a few hours later upon a strange sight. Tumbled into the mud of an open space on State Street were scores of signs and some forty hogsheads of sugar, together with boxes, pails, grindstones, anchors, iron cables, showcases, and numerous other objects.irate owners grumbled about "tyranny" as they reclaimed their property, and there were sarcastic suggestions that such energy might be better spent in pursuit of criminals.¹¹

With all its inadequacies, the police system of Chicago was still much more effective than the organizations which were responsible for protection against fires. The volunteer companies were colorful social clubs and a stirring sight as they dashed through the streets in answer to an alarm. But a disastrous fire which killed twenty-two persons in October, 1857, clearly demonstrated that a city of ninety thousand people could no longer rely upon amateurs. The council would establish a paid fire department before another year had passed. Meanwhile, Wentworth concentrated upon the problem of equipment. In February of 1858, Chicago acquired and tested its first steam fire engine, appropriately christened the "Long John." The volunteer firemen, who correctly viewed the new machine as a harbinger of their doom, gathered to protest its purchase, but Wentworth promptly called out the police. Some of the leading agitators were arrested, and the crowd dispersed. Technology triumphed over tradition.¹²

Chicagoans poured both praise and censure upon their domineering, controversial mayor, but none could accuse him of lacking enthusiasm for his work. His watchful eye was upon every detail of municipal affairs, and he toured the city regularly, with all the interest and pride of a medieval baron inspecting his estates. Easily the most familiar figure on the streets, he was described by the correspondent for a Boston

newspaper as a "shabby, elephantine individual," with a good-natured countenance, who wore an old straw hat turned down all around, a poorly fitted linen coat, unblackened shoes that seemed three sizes too large, and loose trousers which looked "as if he had jumped too far into them and hadn't time to go back."¹³

In the columns of the *Chicago Times*, Wentworth was portrayed as a despicable villain. The Douglas organ repeatedly charged him with spitefulness and dishonesty in his performance as mayor, along with drunkenness, lechery, and the habitual use of vile language. Chicago Democrats looked upon "Johannes Elongatus" as their most dangerous enemy. His acknowledged influence among the Germans of the city and his desperate efforts to recover his standing among the Irish, which he had sacrificed by turning Republican, caused deep concern to a party which depended heavily upon the foreign vote.¹⁴

The *Times* lay in wait for every mayoral act that might have a political motive. The "Czar of all Chicago," it complained, had withdrawn the license of a hackman for openly denouncing him, and he had used the police to "gratify Black Republican hatred" by ordering the arrest of a Democrat engaged in a political census of the city. Concerning the latter incident Long John's paper replied: "We are informed that this is a trick of thieves to steal things out of the halls of houses, while the servant is gone into the parlor to enquire the politics of the occupants."¹⁵

Because they controlled all the federal offices, local Democratic leaders were not entirely helpless in their running battle with the mayor. When certain petty officials of the Dyer regime were arrested, on Wentworth's orders, and convicted of extracting bribes from houses of prostitution, the Democrats struck back immediately. First, the mail agent for Chicago visited Long John's farm at Summit with a search warrant and found a number of the white canvas bags in which public documents were regularly sent to members of Congress. Then, on June 9, 1857, the federal marshal invaded a council meeting to place Wentworth under arrest for his "theft" of government property.

In court, before Judge Thomas Drummond, the case against Long John swiftly collapsed when he was able to demonstrate that it was not the custom for congressmen to return the bags—that Stephen A. Douglas himself had never done so. The

mayor, according to the *Democratic Press*, "came off with flying colors," while his accusers seemed like men trying to shoot "whales with carpet tacks." ¹⁶

The Bloomington *Pantagraph* suggested that the Democrats had ventured to arrest Wentworth because they had mistaken "the tone of the Republican *papers* of Chicago for a fair expression of the feelings of the *party* and the *people* of the city in regard to him." ¹⁷ In the beginning, Long John's administration received some grudging praise from the other Republican editors in the city, but they became increasingly hostile as the months passed. Charles Wilson of the *Journal* was an old Whig enemy. John Locke Scripps and "Deacon" William Bross, editors of the *Democratic Press*, had followed Wentworth closely in politics, but detested him personally. The *Tribune*, elbowing its way to pre-eminence under the aggressive direction of Charles H. Ray and Joseph Medill, was ready to cut down any rival. Incessant quarreling among all four Republican newspapers in the city was a natural result of their spirited competition for circulation and advertising, which became a desperate struggle for survival when the financial panic struck Chicago. But Wentworth, because of his exposed position and high-handed behavior, was the favorite target of editorial abuse.

Bitterly jealous of Long John's prestige as mayor, his competitors lived in daily fear that he might somehow use his extensive power to catapult himself into a higher office. "The height of Mr. Wentworth's ambition . . . is the seat Douglas holds in the U.S. Senate," the *Tribune* warned in November. "All his moves have been made to win that darling prize. He wants to control a balance of power in the next legislature and compel the Republican members to choose between him and Douglas." Wentworth had previously announced his support of Abraham Lincoln for the position, but this, said the *Tribune*, was "simply gammon, intended to allay suspicion and disarm opposition, while he was setting his trap and weaving his web." ¹⁸

Wentworth replied that his senatorial aspirations existed only in the "malignant brain" of Ebenezer Peck, whose son now edited the *Tribune's* local news. "It will be time enough," the *Democrat* said, "to discuss who shall be United States Senator when it shall be ascertained that Douglas cannot be." ¹⁹ This was hardly a complete renunciation of all interest in the honor which most Republicans had already assigned to Lin-

coln, and Long John's enemies continued to watch his movements with deep distrust.

Lincoln himself seemed more disturbed by the signs of party disunity in Chicago than by Wentworth's alleged ambitions. On December 18, 1857, he wrote to a friend:

Let me say to you confidentially, that I do not entirely appreciate what the republican papers of Chicago are so constantly saying against Long John. I consider those papers truly devoted to the republican cause, and not unfriendly to me; but I *do* think that more of what they say against 'Long John' is dictated by personal malice than themselves are conscious of. We can not afford to lose the services of 'Long John' and I do believe the unrelenting warfare made upon him, is injuring our cause.²⁰

Wentworth was obviously pleased by the rumors connecting him with the Senate seat, but any designs that he may have had upon the position were limited to a nebulous hope that something might turn up to make him a more "available" candidate than Lincoln. More urgent problems claimed his attention in the autumn of 1857. The management of the *Democrat*, like that of the Summit farm, had been left largely to trusted subordinates while he concentrated upon his duties as mayor. But two disasters, occurring almost simultaneously, suddenly disrupted the smooth routine of Jackson Hall.

Late in August James Brayman was arrested on charges of theft from the post office. The trial and eventual conviction of his subeditor caused Wentworth much embarrassment, but the situation became even more painful with the exposure of a plot to bribe the chief witness for the prosecution. One of Long John's personal friends was reportedly involved, and the *Tribune* hinted at the suspicion in many minds when it declared: "There were no developments directly implicating Mayor Wentworth. . . ." ²¹

Still heavier was the blow that fell on September 8, 1857, when David Bradley died of "inflammation of the stomach." Trained printer, efficient business manager, and for extended periods of time the real editor of the *Democrat*, Bradley was irreplaceable. His death, coupled with the fact that the paper was steadily losing ground to its more progressive competitors, started a whisper through the city that Wentworth might soon sell out.²²

But startling events in Washington caused Long John to set aside any thought of retirement. A break between Douglas and Buchanan over the Lecompton Constitution for Kansas was disrupting the Democratic party and throwing national politics into confusion. Wentworth was quick to see that both partisan and personal advantages might be gained from a vigorous exploitation of the quarrel. Clearly, this was no time to relinquish control of his newspaper.

Because the more numerous free-state forces in Kansas had refused to participate in the election of delegates on July 15, 1857, the constitutional convention which assembled at Lecompton in October was dominated by Southerners, who seized the opportunity to draft a frame of government that legalized slavery. Knowing that their handiwork faced certain defeat in an honest election, the members of the convention decided to submit only the slavery article to a popular vote. And even if this article should be rejected by the electorate, the right to hold slaves already in Kansas was to remain unimpaired. The free-state majority in the territory was thus offered an unsavory choice between limited and unlimited slavery, with no chance to reject the entire constitution.

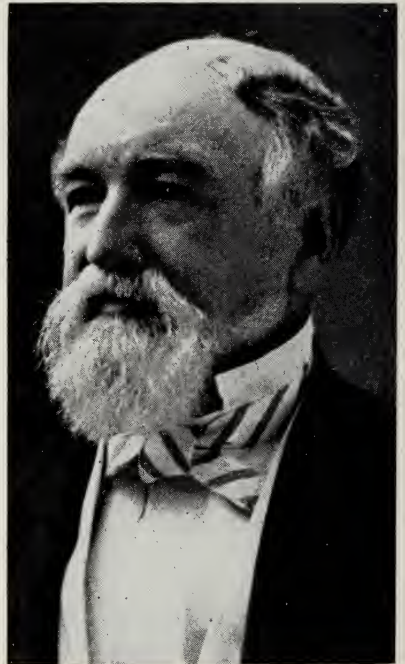
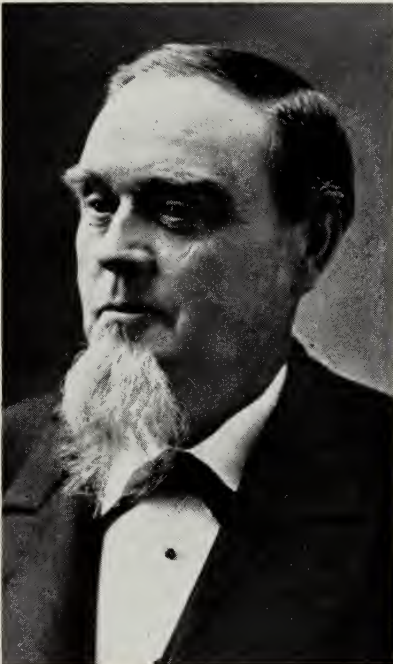
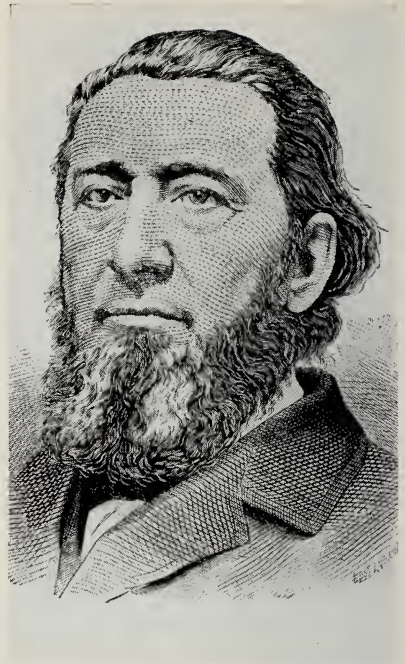
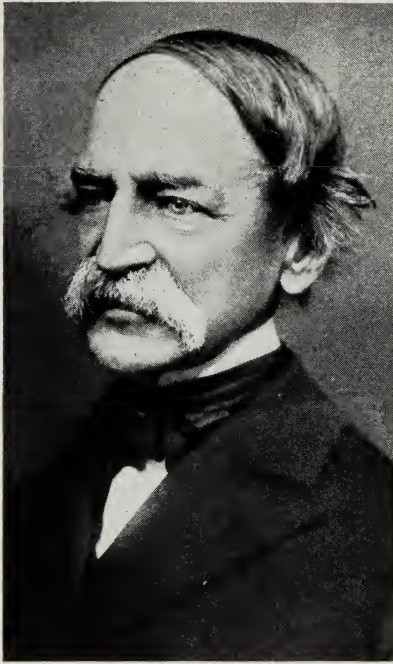
The storm of indignation that greeted the proposed "Lecompton fraud" was not limited to Republicans. Northern Democrats, realizing that the enactment of such a shabby version of popular sovereignty would invite disaster at the polls, were equally vehement in their protests. They applauded Governor Robert J. Walker's declaration that the plan for limited submission was unacceptable, and they responded with thunderous approval when Douglas pronounced the constitution a travesty upon the principles of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

Douglas and Walker carried their views to the White House, but without success. Dominated by Southerners in his cabinet and anxious to be rid of the thorny Kansas problem once and for all, Buchanan gave his full endorsement to the work of the Lecompton Convention. At the election in Kansas on December 21, with the free-state men still refusing to take part, the slavery article was approved. Six weeks later, the president transmitted the constitution to Congress with an earnest recommendation that Kansas be admitted to the Union as the sixteenth slave state.²³

By this time, the lines of battle had formed in Washington, with a bloc of Democrats joining the Republicans in an anti-



At the top, Tremont House, where Wentworth resided for many years. At the bottom, the results of the "sign raid" during Long John's first term as mayor, 1857. Courtesy Chicago Historical Society.



Four of Wentworth's enemies: Isaac N. Arnold, Ebenezer Peck, J. Young Scammon, and Norman B. Judd. Courtesy Chicago Historical Society.

Lecompton coalition. Buchanan partially checked the revolt within his own party by brandishing the axe of patronage, but threats and reprisals only stirred Douglas to more vigorous assaults upon the administration. Republican leaders who conferred with him were so impressed by his determination and sincerity that they even began to hope for his conversion to Republicanism.

These developments placed Illinois Republicans in an awkward position. While they conceded the critical importance of Democratic aid in the fight to save Kansas from slavery, they were also determined to unseat Douglas in the approaching election. Both purposes were served by the dissension among Democrats, but the situation in Illinois called for a strategy quite different from that being followed in Washington. Far from accepting Horace Greeley's unwelcome suggestion that they join in re-electing Douglas to the Senate, Republican leaders of Illinois proposed to hasten his defeat by encouraging the formation of a Buchanan party in the state. This strange "alliance" with the Lecompton Democrats was furtively arranged and frequently denied. Its most ardent and indiscreet sponsor was John Wentworth.²⁴

During the fall of 1857 no Republican newspaper had been more savage than the Chicago *Democrat* in its censure of Buchanan and the Lecompton Convention. But when Douglas added his voice to the opposition, Wentworth, instead of praising him, shifted his editorial attacks to the Little Giant. Warning Republicans to "beware of wolves who now choose to hide their true characters in a more peaceful garb," the *Democrat* declared that it was not yet ready "to endorse the doctrine of instantaneous conversion in politics." Republicans, it added, should have nothing to do with the quarrel between Douglas and the president, except as it could be made "to subserve the interests of freedom." And this end might be attained "as much by encouraging the Administration in its assaults on the Senator as by encouraging the Senator in his assaults on the Administration."²⁵

Thus far, Wentworth was in accord with many other Republicans in the state, but he did not stop there. The *Democrat* suddenly discovered that the man in the White House was a wise and virtuous statesman, far more admirable than the "unscrupulous" Douglas, who was trying to make him the scapegoat for all the evil consequences of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

"We see Judge Douglas in the position of a man who, having done a foul deed, seeks . . . to shoulder the iniquity upon someone else," the paper declared. "Let the true friends of Mr. Buchanan in this region beware of the traitors, who are now creating unnecessary and uncalled for dissensions in their ranks."²⁶

Chicagoans rubbed their eyes at this assertion by their Republican mayor that opposition to the Lecompton Constitution was "unnecessary" and "uncalled for." And they watched with growing suspicion as he conferred with the new postmaster, Ike Cook, and other administration henchmen in the city. What was Long John up to now? Was he plotting to desert the Republican party and take command of the Buchanan forces in the Northwest? The *Tribune* thought it likely, and the Douglas Democrats were even more certain. "Persons in high places in Washington," the *Times* asserted, had entrusted to Wentworth "the task of defeating Douglas," and all the power of federal patronage was now at his disposal for that purpose.²⁷

With each passing week the *Democrat* sounded more and more like an official organ of the administration. On March 11, 1858, looking ahead to the Democratic state convention in April, it exhorted the Buchanan supporters "to leave no stone unturned in their zeal for the President and the principles of the party."

Let every Postmaster do his duty. Let every federal officeholder who is not corrupted by the machinations of Douglas strive to send good men and true to this Convention. . . . The Postmasters have a duty to perform in this matter which the President will not allow them to neglect. No excuse will be taken for want of zeal in this fight. . . . If the Buchanan men are active, vigilant and prudent, they may succeed in preventing the catastrophe which Douglas and his faction are working so industriously to produce.²⁸

From a Republican editor these were amazing words, but Wentworth disavowed any intention of bolting the party. Much as he admired Buchanan's "integrity" and "Jacksonian energy," the *Democrat* explained, Long John could never accept the president's views upon slavery in the territories.²⁹

Actually, his sudden display of cordiality toward the Buchanan administration was for Wentworth an act of instinctive opportunism rather than the preliminary maneuver in an elaborate conspiracy. Cast as a master of political intrigue in the

public mind, he always played his assigned role with enthusiasm, but his pose of mysterious omniscience sometimes concealed a very perplexed state of mind, and his boldest actions were often only emotional and tentative responses to the trend of events.

Coloring all of his attitudes was a burning hatred for the man who had whipped him out of the Democratic party in 1854. That Douglas should now be driven to play the insurgent, that he too should feel the sting of administration reprisals, seemed to Wentworth a miracle of retributive justice. Buchanan's vindictive treatment of the Illinois senator could not fail to win the applause of the Chicago *Democrat* and the gratitude of its editor.

His personal prejudices reinforced Long John's belief that Douglas, because of the added popularity accruing from his anti-Lecompton heroics, constituted a far more dangerous threat to the Republican party than did the supporters of the President. The main purpose of the "Little Dodger," Wentworth warned, was to seduce the "weak sisters in the Republican ranks." Yet Greeley and other Easterners were playing directly into his hands by smothering him with praise. "Either the followers of John C. Frémont or of James Buchanan were right," the *Democrat* insisted, "and there is no middle ground between them."³⁰

Furthermore, if Wentworth nursed any senatorial hopes in the spring of 1858, they were based upon the expectation that administration Democrats would form their own separate organization and enter a slate of candidates in the autumn election. Should they then capture enough seats in the legislature to control the selection of a senator, Long John might conceivably become the choice of an anti-Douglas coalition.

To be eligible, however, he must win the friendship of the "Buchaneers" without forfeiting his standing as a Republican. His formula for accomplishing this delicate task was anything but subtle. Alongside the columns of friendly advice to the Buchanan Democrats, he placed other editorial pronouncements attacking the "Lecompton swindle" in the orthodox Republican manner. On March 9, for example, the *Democrat* declared that Douglas, "the arch traitor of the whole rebel army," had failed in his villainous attempt to divide the Democratic party. At the same time, it called for a national anti-Lecompton convention which would "give Douglas, and the

thousands of other Democrats who are dissatisfied with Mr. Buchanan's administration, a cordial welcome into the Republican ranks." ³¹

Prudence, even more than ambition, dictated these weird contradictions. The working agreement between Illinois Republicans and administration Democrats was a fragile thing which might be swept away at any time by some new shift in the winds of politics. If Douglas should swerve from his independent course to join the Republicans, as some persons expected, or if he should come to terms with the president, as others predicted, the slender thread of common interest connecting these two uncongenial groups would be abruptly severed. And Wentworth, the boldest advocate of collaboration with the "Buchaneers," would find himself in an exposed and untenable position. So Long John, never one to worry about consistency, eulogized the administration but denounced its Kansas policy, execrated Douglas but invited him into the Republican fold, and in this capricious fashion made provision for any eventuality.

In March, while the Lecompton debate raged in the Senate, Wentworth's term as mayor came to an end. Knowing the heavy odds against him, he wisely made no effort to secure renomination. Yet the selection of John C. Haines as the Republican candidate was widely interpreted as another triumph for the wily master of Jackson Hall. "Wentworth got the better of his opponents notwithstanding he was confined to his bed," said the *State Register*. "A further truth is, that the black republican party of Chicago belong to Long John, soul and body." ³²

A dislocated shoulder suffered in a fall on the Lake Street sidewalk had reduced Wentworth's activities during the municipal campaign. The injury also placed him at a painful disadvantage when an irate citizen cornered him in the Tremont House and belabored him with a cane to demonstrate his displeasure at an item which had appeared in the *Democrat*. It was therefore a battered and crippled mayor, accompanied by police escort, who appeared at several pre-election mass meetings to speak in support of Haines. ³³

The Douglas Democrats worked feverishly in behalf of their own nominee, Dr. Daniel Brainard, and the *Times* ridiculed "Little John" Haines as a Wentworth puppet, but the Republicans carried the election on March 2, and Haines took the

oath of office two weeks later. For the third time in fifteen years, Long John found himself returned to private life. His withdrawal had been a graceful one, but he did not find it easy to surrender the power that he had exercised during his year as mayor. Hovering solicitously at the elbow of his successor, he offered advice on appointments, screened visitors, and helped "Little John" write his inaugural address. Some Republicans began to fear that the *Times* had been accurate in labeling Haines a cat's-paw. An indignant letter published in the *Tribune* called for "one Mayor at a time," and advised the new administration to free itself from the influence of "a political desperado who finds himself in the bog of public detestation."³⁴

On March 26, however, Long John suddenly left Haines to shift for himself and departed for New York, having received word that his five-month-old son was critically ill. He arrived at the Loomis home in Troy to find that the baby had already succumbed to "congestion of the brain." Of the five children born to Marie Wentworth, only Roxanna, now a sturdy little girl in her fourth year, had survived the perils of infancy.³⁵

After three weeks with his family, Wentworth hurried back to Chicago. The friendly attitude toward Douglas that seemed to prevail among Eastern Republicans had disturbed him greatly, and he immediately confided his apprehensions to Abraham Lincoln:

I have but just returned from New York. I fear that Seward, Weed & others of that school are for Douglass. A reliable republican, but an old line whig lawyer in this city, told me today that *he himself had seen* a letter from one of our Republican Congressmen advising us all to go for the reelection of Judge Douglass. He said he was enjoined to keep the author a secret & he was going to do so.

From him, I learnt that he was not an old line Democrat or abolitionist. This narrows the contest down to the Congressmen from the Galena and Fulton Dists.

In this region, the abolitionists & old line Democrats are strong against Douglas. You must see that he does not get the Republicans who were old line whigs.

I fear, Lincoln, that you are sold for the Senate by men who are drinking the wine of Douglass in Washington.³⁶

The Illinois congressman to whom Long John referred was obviously Elihu B. Washburne of Galena, and Lincoln wrote

to him, quoting from Wentworth's letter, but adding that he believed "the whole had originated in some misconception." In his prompt reply, Washburne denied advocating the re-election of Douglas and pledged his faithful support to Lincoln. Wentworth, he charged, was trying to "prejudice" him and disrupt the Republican party in Illinois.³⁷

The source of the trouble, it developed, was a seemingly innocuous letter from Washburne to Charles Wilson, editor of the *Chicago Journal*, in which the congressman expressed some pleasure at Douglas' battle against the Lecompton Constitution. Wilson had shown the letter to Samuel L. Baker—the "old line whig lawyer"—and he in turn had reported its contents to Wentworth. The distortion was apparently the work of Baker, not Wentworth. At least Lincoln came to that conclusion after a personal conversation with Baker, and he defended Long John against charges of willful misrepresentation.³⁸

But Wentworth's Republican enemies in Chicago were convinced that he had seized upon an opportunity to disorganize the party in the hope of improving his own political prospects. The *Tribune's* editor, Charles H. Ray, became almost apoplectic in his anger, and Wilson covered his own indiscretion by denouncing Long John as a "notorious and unmitigated scoundrel" who was attempting to ingratiate himself with Lincoln by assailing the latter's most loyal friends. "He is an aspirant for the office of Governor!" Wilson explained in a letter to Washburne. "He knows he stands but a beggar's chance however, unless he can create aberration and distrust . . ." ³⁹

The suspicion that Wentworth had shifted his sights to the governorship was aroused by his forthright endorsement of Lincoln after returning from Troy. A miserable showing by Buchanan Democrats at the state convention on April 21 had erased any lingering hope of winning the Senate seat for himself, and Long John now categorically renounced all ambition for the honor. "Lincoln has worked hard and had nothing," said the *Democrat* on May 1. "We have seen 'Long John,' and he says he has been Mayor of Chicago one year, and that is glory enough for him. He goes for Lincoln. . . ." In succeeding issues the paper repeated these sentiments and confidently predicted that Douglas would be defeated.⁴⁰

Immediately the rumor spread that Lincoln had enlisted Wentworth's aid by promising to support him for governor in 1860. From Springfield came an emphatic denial. "I have had

many free conversations with John Wentworth," Lincoln declared, "but he never dropped a remark that led me to suspect that he wishes to be Governor. Indeed, it is due to truth to say that while he has uniformly expressed himself for me, he has never hinted at any condition."⁴¹

Whatever their worries about Long John's plans for 1860, his Republican enemies no longer considered him a serious threat to Lincoln in 1858. But the Douglas newspapers in the state noisily insisted that he was still a candidate for the Senate. "Under no possible circumstances will Wentworth allow Lincoln to be chosen," the *Chicago Times* predicted. Everyone knew, it added, that he intended to "pack the nominating conventions in the northern counties" so that all Republican candidates for the legislature would be "his own creatures, pledged to vote for him through thick and thin." Other Democratic editors took up the refrain and repeated it endlessly: a vote for Republican legislators was a vote to place Wentworth in the Senate; Lincoln was destined to be cheated again!⁴²

Republican leaders recognized these editorial fantasies for the shrewd political propaganda that they were. Lincoln was the overwhelming choice of his party, and neither Long John nor any other man could displace him. But his name would not appear upon the ballot in the autumn election because senators were still chosen by state legislatures. And if the Democrats could convince some undecided voters that the contest was actually between Douglas and the widely disliked Wentworth, they might strengthen their chances of victory. "Doubtless Mr. Douglas would be pleased to have the privilege of naming his opponent," the *Democratic Press* disdainfully observed. The *Journal* ridiculed Democratic attempts to "make an ogre out of Wentworth," and the *Tribune* asserted that Long John was "a cordial supporter of Abraham Lincoln." The *Democrat* itself earnestly and innocently proclaimed, "We hang out our banner on the outer wall: Abraham Lincoln for Senator."⁴³

More alarming to Lincoln's supporters than the Democratic clamor about Wentworth was the unrelenting praise of Douglas that flowed from the pens and lips of certain Eastern Republicans. By his opposition in April to the English Compromise, which resubmitted the Lecompton Constitution on peculiar terms to the voters of Kansas, Douglas had intensified his quarrel with Buchanan and raised himself higher than ever in the estimation of men like Horace Greeley. Illinois Republi-

can leaders, whose hatred for the Little Giant was too deep-rooted and personal to be dissolved by one stroke of political strategy, were shocked to find themselves pressed by the New York *Tribune* and other Eastern papers to embrace their arch-enemy and send him triumphantly back to the Senate.

They were angered even more by the patronizing tone in which the offensive advice was offered. "There seems," said the Chicago *Tribune*, "to be a considerable notion pervading the brains of political wet-nurses at the East, that the barbarians of Illinois cannot take care of themselves. . . . If the Republicans of Illinois should now sink all party differences and re-elect Mr. Douglas, their party would be so disintegrated that the State would be lost to freedom in 1860." ⁴⁴

Greeley received most of the blame in Illinois, but Wentworth insisted that the real villain was William Seward. Nearly all the Republican support for Douglas was emanating from "Seward Whig" newspapers, he charged. As governor of New York in the 1840's, Seward had shown a marked sympathy for Catholicism. Members of the Douglas family were "out-and-out Catholics." And now, under the direction of Bishop John Hughes, a great Catholic plot was unfolding to return Douglas to the Senate and make Seward the next president. "It is the Pope of Rome . . . who says that Abraham Lincoln shall not be United States Senator," the *Democrat* thundered. ⁴⁵

In this calculated appeal to religious bigotry, Long John was merely imitating other Republican editors who bitterly resented the tenacious loyalty of Irish Catholics to the Democratic party. But his sweeping indictment of Whiggery and its most distinguished leader provoked indignant replies. The *Journal* warned that the "cowardly guerilla" of Jackson Hall had resumed his efforts to set Republicans against one another and demanded that he be repudiated by the party once and for all. ⁴⁶

The Illinois answer to Easterners who favored Douglas was drafted at the grass-roots level in the Republican county conventions which met during the early weeks of June. In one after another of these meetings, the delegates passed resolutions specifically naming Lincoln as the Republican choice for the Senate. According to the Chicago *Tribune*, ninety-five counties had taken such action by the eve of the state convention. This remarkable demonstration of party unity was the result, said the *Tribune*, of no arrangement or concert. It was

rather "the natural and expected remonstrance against outside intermeddling."⁴⁷

When the state convention assembled at Springfield on June 16, it was almost inevitable that the forthright declarations of the county organizations should be ratified. At a favorable point in the proceedings, Charles Wilson rose to offer a resolution declaring that Lincoln was the "first and only" Republican choice for the Senate. Received with wild enthusiasm, it was adopted unanimously, and Lincoln responded with his famous "House-Divided" speech.⁴⁸

Although the resolution was generally regarded as a stern rebuke to the Eastern "wet-nurses," Lincoln himself thought that it had been passed "more for the object of closing down upon this everlasting croaking about Wentworth, than anything else."⁴⁹ Some historians, seizing upon these words, have explained the nomination of Lincoln as an adroit move by Long John's enemies to thwart his senatorial ambitions, but the facts do not support such a view. Lincoln was referring to the "croaking" in the Democratic newspapers, not to any organized effort for Wentworth within Republican ranks. It is likely that Wilson, when he presented Lincoln's name, had several purposes in mind, and that one of them was to scotch the preposterous stories circulated by the *Chicago Times* about Long John's alleged plot to steal the Senate seat. But the Wilson resolution, after all, was merely the culmination of action already taken in ninety-five county conventions, and the primary target of those conventions was Horace Greeley, not John Wentworth.⁵⁰

Far from preparing an elaborate underground campaign to "swindle" Lincoln, Long John was making plans to spend the summer with his family. As early as June 6, he had written to Lincoln explaining that he might not be able to attend the state convention, even though he had been chosen a delegate. At the last moment he changed his mind and made the trip to Springfield, departing for Troy a few days later. Except for one brief interlude, he remained in the East until the middle of October, and thus missed all but a few weeks of the most celebrated campaign in Illinois history.⁵¹

An ugly scandal involving his name brought Wentworth back to Chicago for a short time during August. Investigations by a grand jury had revealed that the Chicago police department was employing a certain George P. Brown to patronize

various brothels in the city for the purpose of gathering evidence against their inmates. Mayor Haines insisted that his predecessor had hired "Beast" Brown, while Long John generously awarded Haines all the credit for devising the ingenious undercover system. In his charge to the grand jury, Judge Robert S. Wilson left no doubt as to which man he considered responsible. He denounced the editor of the *Democrat* in scathing terms and practically demanded his indictment for conspiracy. The jury, after reviewing the testimony, chose not to indict, but at the same time it reprimanded Wentworth and the other officials involved. The public censure that accompanied this dubious exoneration probably encouraged Long John to resume his Eastern vacation.⁵²

The late-summer prairie heat was no more intense than the political excitement in Illinois as Douglas and Lincoln began their historic series of debates. Wentworth watched the contest from New Hampshire, where a Portsmouth newspaper quoted him as predicting that Douglas would win. Rumors drifting back to Illinois pictured him brooding over imagined injuries and plotting revenge upon his enemies. The *Chicago Times* pointed to his prolonged absence as further proof that he was "utterly opposed to Lincoln's election."⁵³

Yet if the files of the *Chicago Democrat* are any index to its proprietor's attitude, Long John was an unwavering supporter of Lincoln throughout the campaign. The paper reported each debate in the best partisan style of the day. Lincoln invariably "annihilated his opponent" or "strip[ped] the Giant dry," while Douglas "roared and raved" like a "mad bull" and shirked the issues to indulge in offensive personalities. One editorial suggested that Lincoln must now be considered presidential material. "He wears well," it declared. "He is a standard-bearer every way worthy of the party and its principles—high-toned, chivalric, and honorable. . . ." ⁵⁴

In mid-October Wentworth finally returned to Chicago and threw himself personally into the battle for a Republican legislature. It was not an easy thing to do, for one of the candidates in his own district was an ancient enemy, Ebenezer Peck. But in his burning desire to see Douglas defeated, he swallowed his distaste and placed Peck's name on the masthead of the *Democrat*. The inevitable mass meetings became more frequent as election day drew near, and almost every evening Long John lumbered out upon some platform in the city to tell

cheering Republicans that they must vote for the Republican ticket.⁵⁵

The weather was cold and rainy on November 2, but an unprecedented number of Chicagoans turned out to give Peck and the other Republican candidates a comfortable majority. As the results in the rest of the state were tabulated, however, it became apparent that an outdated apportionment law had saved the election for Douglas. The Republicans had polled more votes, but the Democrats would control the new legislature.

Surveying the wreckage of their hopes after the election, Illinois Republicans did not conceal their bitterness toward those Eastern leaders whose disloyalty they blamed for Lincoln's defeat. Angry voices demanded a statewide boycott of the New York *Tribune* and promised that Seward would never get the presidential nomination in 1860 if the vote of Illinois could prevent it.⁵⁶

The *Democrat* joined vigorously in these recriminations, but in private correspondence Wentworth pointed to the state central committee and its chairman, Norman B. Judd, as the real architects of disaster. The campaign had been wretchedly handled, he advised David Davis. The central committee had been inept and divided. Its funds had been spent unwisely and without consulting some of its members. If Judd had not sacrificed Lincoln's interests to further his own selfish ambitions, Douglas might have been beaten. "It appears that we have a sort of organization within the Republican Organization that wants Mr. Judd to be Governor," Long John complained. "I look upon the whole management as making Lincoln incidental to the project of certain men for the future."⁵⁷

As Wentworth no doubt intended, Davis promptly relayed this diagnosis of the defeat to Lincoln. In fixing the blame upon Judd, Long John was firing the first gun in another desperate battle for control of the Republican party in Chicago. Judd was a powerful figure in the state Senate and a leader of the "*Tribune* Clique," which included most of Wentworth's deadliest enemies in the city. To frustrate the aspirations and destroy the influence of this dangerous rival, Long John was resolved to drive a wedge between Judd and the "Great Man of Illinois,"⁵⁸ Abraham Lincoln. His future in politics seemed to require that he revert to his old role of party marplot.

CHAPTER X

The Quarrel with Judd

I have today instituted a libel suit against Wentworth and intend to follow him daily until I mend his manners. As to our local politics I can only say that Wentworth desires to be Mayor and cannot be.—*Norman B. Judd to Lyman Trumbull, December 1, 1859.*

THE ELECTION RESULTS in 1858 made grim reading for James Buchanan and his advisers. Eighteen seats in Congress had been lost to the Republicans, most of them in pivotal states like New York, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. The triumph of Douglas in Illinois yielded no consolation. It was an even more painful rebuke to the president, and it tended to widen the ominous breach in the Democracy. Gloom descended upon the White House, and the confidence of Republicans mounted at the indications that they would face a divided opposition in 1860.

Yet in Illinois, where all but a few thousand Democrats had demonstrated their unswerving loyalty to Douglas in the recent election, it was the Republican party that was troubled by dissension. Five years had been too short a time for fusing the loose anti-Nebraska coalition into a cohesive political organization. Old animosities persisted, old wounds still burned. Moderates were unhappy over the influence of radical abolitionists like Owen Lovejoy. Germans watched every move of the nativist element with unconcealed distrust. Old-line Whigs

insisted that the former Democrats in the party exercised power out of proportion to their numerical strength. Chicagoans charged that their region had been neglected in nominations for state offices. Newspaper rivalries and personal feuds further aggravated the distressing factionalism. With Governor Bissell in failing health, and Senator Trumbull too closely allied with one wing of the party to be an effective peacemaker, the endless task of soothing ruffled tempers and mediating quarrels seemed to fall increasingly upon Abraham Lincoln's shoulders.

Harmony was the more essential to Illinois Republicans because a Senate seat, the governorship, and perhaps even a place on the national ticket were all at stake in the approaching campaign. There was little opposition to Trumbull's reelection to the United States Senate, and with each passing month it became more generally accepted that Lincoln's name would be presented at the national convention. But the selection of a candidate for governor promised to excite a bitter contest. Norman Judd, the able railroad attorney who had served for many years as state senator from Cook County, made no secret of his desire for the nomination. Objectionable to conservative Whigs, to many down-state editors, and to John Wentworth, Judd became the central figure in the factional struggle for control of the party.

For a brief interval early in 1859, it appeared that Long John might have lost interest in politics. In the *Democrat* of January 22, he emphatically denied being a candidate for mayor, adding that he intended to reduce his responsibilities and take a "few years of respite." The mood quickly passed, however, and the first signs of spring found him once again trading lusty blows with his Republican adversaries.

The *Democrat* concentrated its fire upon the legislative records of Judd and Peck, whom it accused of using their offices to extract lucrative legal fees from railroads and other corporations. "The time is now come," the paper declared, "when the corporations should not be compelled to feed a lot of politicians every time they wish a favor in our Legislature, nor to keep retained a set of hungry lawyers, merely because they have seats in the Legislature."¹

The shocking revelation, early in 1859, that Joel A. Matteson had stolen money from the state during his recent term as governor supplied Wentworth with additional ammunition in

his assaults upon Judd. Reminding its readers that the two men had long been close friends, the *Democrat* hinted vaguely at Judd's collusion in the Matteson fraud. Without producing the slightest bit of evidence to support his insinuations, Long John repeated them month after month, until he was openly accusing Judd of wanting to be governor so that he could continue his "schemes for speculating out of the public treasury."²

The denunciation of Judd was intended to deflate his political aspirations, but it was also a part of the *Democrat's* death struggle with the *Chicago Press and Tribune*. During the summer of 1858, a time of continuing financial distress, the *Tribune* had merged with the *Democratic Press* to form perhaps the most powerful newspaper enterprise in the state. Overflowing with editorial talent, spending money freely to improve its plant and expand its subscription list, the *Press and Tribune* exemplified the emerging pattern of big-business journalism in America. Aggressively competitive, it had already tried, unsuccessfully, to invade the *Journal's* special preserve with an evening edition, and it looked upon Wentworth's "little one-horse establishment" as a nuisance to be eliminated at the earliest possible moment.³

The *Democrat*, on the other hand, still plodded along its familiar path as the personal political organ of its colorful proprietor—cautiously financed, backward in methods and equipment, slipping steadily behind its rivals in circulation. "Our contemporaries crow a great deal over us because we are not quite so fast as they are," Long John complacently observed. "They boast of their immense business, innumerable subscribers, and marble palaces. But every little while we find them neglecting to meet notes when they become due. . . . We make it a rule invariably to owe no man. This keeps our paper independent and saucy."⁴

The *Democrat* had known its most prosperous days when Wentworth, from his seat in Congress, could influence federal appointments and expenditures in northern Illinois. In 1859 he still profited from the printing patronage of the county and municipal governments, but only, according to the *Press and Tribune*, because of his skill at the business known as "pulling."

The editor of the *Democrat* 'pulls' the Court House and the Common Council. For twenty years, the operation has been continued. . . . The amount which annually falls into the money-drawer of that concern, collected for jobs that are execrably

done, for advertisements that nobody reads, for Council Proceedings that appear after all interested have learned from the *Press and Tribune* what they contain, is not less than twelve thousand dollars per annum! . . . Without the run of the Court House and the Council Chamber, the *Democrat* would come to a dead halt. It stinks now wherever truth and decency in a newspaper are expected. But, as during a famous city administration, houses of prostitution that would come down with the money, or pay in kind, were exempted from the 'pulling' process, so the money that keeps the *Democrat* a-going, and that carries its six hundred copies out to the doors of as many groceries every morning, is 'pulled' out of the fears of those who give it.⁵

After the inauguration of Mayor Haines in the spring of 1858, the *Democrat* had been restored to its old position of official newspaper for the city. But Wentworth's influence upon his successor had evaporated in the heat of the "Beast" Brown investigation, and by the time Haines won re-election in 1859, he had drifted into the camp of Long John's enemies. His second inaugural address, which included several unfriendly references to Wentworth's record as mayor, left no doubt as to where Haines now stood. It was therefore no surprise when the newly elected council stripped the *Democrat* of the municipal patronage and awarded it to the *Press and Tribune*. County officials soon followed the council's example, and the *Democrat* found itself operating for the first time without governmental subsidies of any kind. By September it was said to be losing money at the rate of \$150 a week.⁶

Confronted with a powerful combination of enemies that seemed determined to destroy utterly his influence in the Republican party, Wentworth struck back savagely, both in editorials and in speeches. One Saturday evening in April, a Republican mass meeting at Metropolitan Hall was interrupted by the sound of bagpipes. Down the center aisle marched the piper, followed by Long John, who proceeded briskly to the platform and for one and one-half hours denounced Peck, Judd, the "*Pressed Tribune*," and other assorted adversaries. As soon as he had finished, Judd leaped from his seat and launched into an angry reply. The audience loved the whole show. When Judd at one point described Wentworth as "a most corrupt liar and knave," someone shouted, "Put it to a vote!" And a thunderous "yea" echoed through the hall. The unsched-

uled debate set the tone for the next twelve months in Chicago politics.⁷

While his rivalry with Judd was erupting into open warfare during the spring of 1859, Long John was preparing for the climax of another battle in which he was deeply involved. In this case, the prize at stake was not a political office, but control of the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad.

Since selling his investments in the Illinois Central, Wentworth had purchased more and more Galena stock until he now held 381 shares—along with some \$10,000 in bonds—and claimed to be the largest stockholder in Illinois.⁸ The Galena was one of the most prosperous roads in the West, paying dividends of 22 per cent in 1856. Having completed its main line of track across the fertile farm lands of northern Illinois to the Mississippi, the company was studying plans for a bridge over the river to connect with Iowa roads already being built westward. At the same time, it had absorbed several branch lines and was pushing their construction northward to Wisconsin.⁹

But the expenditures necessary for such a program of expansion, together with the decline in income as a result of the financial panic, dictated a sharp reduction in dividends for 1857. This action consolidated the opposition of certain influential stockholders to the management of the railroad, and they launched a vigorous campaign to gain control of the board of directors.

In associating himself with Walter L. Newberry, William H. Brown, and the other dissatisfied investors, Wentworth was motivated at least in part by personal animosity. The president of the Galena was John B. Turner, who had wrested the Democratic nomination for Congress from him in 1854. William McAlpine, the chief engineer, had earned Long John's enmity during the prolonged debates over the Chicago water system.¹⁰ Most annoying of all was the fact that the legal affairs of the railroad were handled by Ebenezer Peck.

Yet his opposition to the Turner policies also reflected Wentworth's conservative philosophy of business enterprise. "We believe our railroads should be conducted as economically as possible," he declared, "and that their earnings over their barely necessary expenses should be faithfully divided among their stockholders." Labeling the officers of the road "dividend-eaters," he charged that they had much more money invested

in branch lines, town lots, and other speculative ventures, than in the Galena itself; that by voting themselves high salaries and diverting Galena funds to finance their questionable subsidiary projects, Turner and his associates were engaging in "downright robbery" of the stockholders. In Long John's opinion, the Wisconsin branch lines were worthless, the proposed Mississippi bridge was a "wild scheme," and the Iowa roads were risky speculations. He had no ambition to participate in the building of a railroad empire. All that he wanted was prudent management and high dividends.¹¹

A spirited contest for proxies preceded the annual stockholders' meeting of June 2, 1858, but in spite of strenuous efforts by the Newberry-Wentworth faction, the balloting resulted in a narrow victory for Turner and his allies. All was not lost, however. A resolution was introduced—and eventually approved—requiring that any contract for making a branch extension, or for lending the credit of the company to another railroad, must be submitted to the stockholders. In accordance with this new regulation, Turner presented to a special stockholders' meeting on October 6, 1858, his plan for the construction of a bridge between Fulton, Illinois, and Lyons, Iowa. When it was rejected by an overwhelming vote, he promptly tendered his resignation as president.¹²

The debate between the two rival groups continued throughout the winter and spring, but when the stockholders gathered in Chicago on June 1, 1859, for their regular annual meeting, it was apparent that the anti-Turner faction had gained the upper hand. Turner, McAlpine, and several of their supporters were replaced as directors by Wentworth and other advocates of a more conservative financial policy. Newberry became president; Brown, vice-president; and Long John was elected to the executive committee. The "extension and branch" program had apparently been repudiated.¹³

Yet the upheaval was actually less revolutionary than it seemed, for the new managers of the Galena found it unwise or impossible to discard completely the plans of their predecessors. The downfall of Turner and McAlpine aroused much speculation in Chicago newspapers about the future of the Mississippi bridge. The *Times* asserted that the whole project was now as good as dead, and Wentworth struck a similar note in the *Democrat* when he suggested that the railroad might never exercise its chartered rights to build a bridge. But the

Press and Tribune insisted that the real bone of contention between the two factions had been the exact location of the proposed structure. The new directors, it declared, favored construction at Clinton—rather than at Lyons—and closer ties with the Chicago, Iowa, and Nebraska Railroad, which connected Clinton with Cedar Rapids.¹⁴

Such proved to be the case. By February of 1860, the Mississippi had been bridged from a point several miles south of Fulton to an island near Clinton on the Iowa side of the river. Five years were to elapse, however, before the shorter western span was completed. In 1861 Wentworth so far renounced his earlier prejudices as to accept election to the board of the Chicago, Iowa, and Nebraska. One year later the Galena's stockholders approved contracts for the perpetual leasing of the Iowa line, and of its western neighbor, the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad, which was building rapidly toward Council Bluffs.¹⁵

One of Long John's first actions upon becoming a director of the Galena in 1859 was to propose the employment of a full-time attorney, and to secure the appointment of his friend Elliott Anthony to fill the position. This maneuver, which neatly removed Peck from the scene, was viewed in some quarters as proof that Wentworth hoped to use his new position as a springboard to political office—perhaps the governorship. The *Chicago Times* denounced the "conversion of the Directory into a political clique to enable one man to defeat rival aspirants in his own party." Nine members of the Galena's board, it charged, were now "senseless automatons in the hands of Wentworth."¹⁶

Prophesying Long John's political future became a popular sport for some newspapers during the summer of 1859. His undisguised hostility toward Haines nourished the fear of certain Republicans that he was planning to run for mayor again. They did not doubt that if elected he would use the office to harass his enemies and to advance his own claims to the Senate or the governorship.¹⁷

On the other hand, there were observers in both parties who suspected that Long John had lost all hope of preferment as a Republican and was preparing to join the Democrats once more. They offered in evidence his sharp criticism of the Bissell administration, his extensive negotiations with certain leaders of the Irish Democracy in Chicago, and his announcement

in August that he favored Sam Houston for president. "John Wentworth," said the *Joliet Signal*, "has no affinities in common with the Republicans, and as soon as he turns against them, which event is not at all unlikely, judging from recent developments, Republicanism in Illinois is defunct."¹⁸

But Wentworth had never yet taken voluntary leave of a political party, and he did not contemplate doing so now. Editorial assaults upon the state officials in Springfield, an old habit with him, were not a reliable indication of his ultimate intentions. His sudden enthusiasm for Houston, who had just been elected governor of Texas, amounted to little more than a brief attack of nostalgia—a yearning for someone in the image of Andrew Jackson to lead the nation away from the edge of disaster. As for the Irish Democrats, they had been known to cast votes in Republican primaries—a reprehensible practice, but one that could be useful to a man who made the proper arrangements in advance.

Any doubts that Long John was still a Republican must have been dispelled by his reactions to the John Brown adventure at Harper's Ferry in October. Like many other Northern editors, he at first condemned the raid, but not without exulting that the "retaliatory outrage" had returned "the poisoned chalice to the lips of the South." As the dramatic trial in Virginia proceeded toward its inevitable conclusion, he succumbed more and more to the emotional frenzy that was sweeping through the free states. The *Democrat* described Brown as a "martyr and saint," who had performed a "great and glorious work," and it denounced his execution on December 2 in the following words: "The first political martyr ever executed in the United States paid the penalty of his devotion to freedom yesterday by a death upon the gallows—and already his blood has found a million tongues to plead for vengeance on his murderers."¹⁹ No amount of anger at his enemies within the Republican party could offset Wentworth's deeper hatred of the South, or drive him back into political association with slaveholding Democrats.

In the midst of the Harper's Ferry excitement, Long John's running battle with Judd reached a startling climax. The *Democrat* had not only continued its relentless assaults upon Judd's financial honesty—linking his name always with the Matteson fraud—but it had persevered also in its efforts to prove that he was conniving against Lincoln. Again and again

Wentworth accused his adversary of "bolting" Lincoln's nomination for the Senate in 1855, of bungling the 1858 campaign, and of misusing funds collected by him as state chairman. And now he was plotting to "cheat Lincoln for the third time" by promoting Trumbull as a presidential candidate in return for the latter's endorsement of his own gubernatorial aspirations. "Judd is one of the most avaricious and selfish men living," said the *Democrat*. "We do not complain that he is a friend to Judge Trumbull, or to himself, but we do complain that he is friendly to any one in particular, whilst he holds a position requiring the utmost impartiality."²⁰

After many years of service in the state Senate, Judd fairly itched to be the next governor. Wentworth's opposition to his nomination was in itself neither unexpected nor decisive, but to his consternation, the charges in the *Democrat* were picked up and repeated by other Republicans. Charles Wilson of the *Journal*, still resenting the attempt of the *Press and Tribune* to publish an evening edition, now allied himself with Long John. Down-state leaders who favored other candidates for governor were happy to place Judd upon the defensive. Even William Herndon joined in the whispering campaign against him.²¹

Stung to a fury by the attacks, Judd reproached Lincoln for his failure to disavow them. "I am berated in the newspapers," he complained, "slandered in private conversation . . . and all this without any public defense by you or any of your friends. . . . I ask no sympathy but I demand justice from those who know that I am wronged." Wentworth, he added, must be silenced or driven from the party, and his accomplices "kicked into the kennel with the rest of the curs." On the same day—December 1, 1859—that he penned this indignant letter, Judd brought suit against Wentworth for libel, asking \$100,000 in damages.²²

It was a blow at his enemy's most vulnerable spot. Years of exposure had toughened Long John's skin against the most savage words of abuse, and physical assaults had seldom driven him into retreat. But the threat to his personal fortune thoroughly frightened him, and the tone of his editorials softened at once. He protested vehemently that he had no intention of libeling Judd, that his opposition was political rather than personal. "Within a few days past the *Chicago Democrat* has become a model of benignity," gloated the *Press and Tri-*

bune on December 12, while a Chicagoan writing to Trumbull the following week observed:

The most wonderful thing here that has lately occurred in politics, has been Judd's shutting up of Long John. Wentworth for once has had his gun, or more truly *Fouling Piece*, effectually spiked. He is as tame as a punished boy. . . . It is regarded here as almost a miracle that Judd's one blow should have so badly broken the teeth of this dirty dog. . . .²³

The lawsuit dismayed more Republicans than it delighted, however. Two party leaders hounding each other with such unbridled malignity was an alarming spectacle on the eve of a critical national election. One worried man wrote to Lincoln urging that he act quickly to stop "the war of the Roses" in Chicago. "You can command in this matter," he asserted. "As the acknowledged, indisputable leader of the party you can enforce the peace."²⁴

But it was Wentworth who made the most unusual attempt to draw Lincoln into the dispute. "I wish to retain you in my suit," he wrote on December 21.

The very reason that you may assign for declining my offer is the very one that urges me to write you. You are friendly to us both. I prefer to put myself in the hands of mutual friends rather than like J[udd] put myself in the hands of those who have a deep interest in keeping up a quarrel. . . . If you cannot serve me, do not say so at once; but keep the offer under advisement. . . .²⁵

Lincoln, now emerging as a serious contender for the presidential nomination, and needing the help of a united party in his own state, thus found himself pressed from all sides to intervene in the quarrel. Responding first to Judd's importunate demands, he drafted a letter for publication in which he absolved the state chairman of all charges of treachery and praised his performance as head of the central committee. At the same time, however, he emphasized his determination to "take no part between the many friends, all good and true," who were mentioned as candidates for governor. To Judd, who had counted upon Lincoln's open support, this was a painful disappointment.²⁶

As for the invitation to become Wentworth's counsel in the libel suit, Lincoln neither accepted nor rejected it. Instead, he offered to act as mediator, and early in February he submitted

his plan for restoring peace in Chicago. Wentworth was to file with the court a disclaimer worded as follows: "I have made no reflections upon Mr. Judd, morally, socially, pecuniarily, professionally, and in no other way, save politically, and if I have used any language capable of a different construction, I have not intended it, and now retract it." Judd, in return, would be expected to press his suit no further.²⁷

Anxiety furrowed Long John's brow as he read the proposal. The retraction itself amounted to little more than his earlier protestations in the *Democrat*, but there seemed to be no guarantee that Judd would withdraw his suit permanently from the court docket. "I want an immediate & *final* settlement, if any," he complained to Lincoln. "You may die, & then what? I want to fight in 1860 with nothing hanging over my head. Your proposition might drive me out of the State, lest by staying I give offence."²⁸

For additional support, Wentworth turned to Judge David Davis, who shared his low estimate of Judd and wanted to see Leonard Swett nominated for governor. Davis promptly wrote to Lincoln, volunteering his opinion that the public would look upon the retraction as a victory for Judd, and that the latter should therefore be willing to consider it a full indemnity. "The retaining the suits on the docket, after such a disclaimer is filed by Wentworth, is surely degrading to him," he argued. "I trust that you will be able to effect a settlement on the above basis."²⁹

At this point the negotiations languished, and Lincoln left for New York to deliver his address at Cooper Union. In Chicago, meanwhile, the time for the annual spring election had arrived, and Long John was diligently marshaling his forces for the contest. The menace of the libel suit had only stimulated his desire to be chosen mayor again. Such a victory at the polls would be the best vindication of his conduct toward Judd.

But the odds appeared to be against his winning the Republican nomination. The *Press and Tribune* predicted "inevitable" defeat if his name should be placed at the head of the municipal ticket, and Isaac Arnold, the choice of the Judd faction, was a dangerous rival. "Wentworth is undoubtedly losing ground," observed the *State Register*. "His influence is on the wane, and he is sensible of it."³⁰

The *Democrat* protested that Arnold was also a candidate

for Congress and ought to be satisfied with one office at a time, whereupon certain party leaders implored both men to retire from the contest in the name of harmony. Long John replied that he was ready to withdraw whenever Judd removed himself from the race for governor. He made the offer without fear, knowing that it would not be accepted.³¹

The day of decision was February 17, 1860, when Chicago Republicans filed into their polling places to choose delegates to the city convention. For those politicians who supposed that the editor of the *Democrat* had lost his popular appeal the results were a rude shock. Wentworth's supporters swept nine of the ten wards, and Judd himself was badly beaten as leader of the Arnold ticket in the first ward. When the convention met the next day, it nominated Long John on the first ballot. "The abuse of the *Press & Tribune*, this libel suit & other acts of persecution have compelled me to show my strength once more," he boasted to Lincoln.³²

The election remained to be won, and Wentworth had only ten days in which to extract some measure of support from the Republicans who had opposed his nomination. In the atmosphere of lingering bitterness, it was not an easy task. The *Press and Tribune* gave him a sullen endorsement, but Ebenezer Peck set a different example with the announcement that he intended to vote for the Democratic candidate, former Mayor Walter Gurnee.³³

Judd was in a quandary. His own ambitions and the welfare of the party seemed to require that he lend assistance to his deadliest enemy. "Can you show me how I can do it consistently with my own personal honor," he demanded in a letter to Lincoln. "W[entworth] has published that he will not support me if nominated. I have also put him on record charged with libels innumerable. These things unretracted can or ought I to 'eat dirt.' . . . What shall I do write me."³⁴

At the same time, a worried Long John was summoning Lincoln to Chicago for one of the Republican mass meetings. "You can fix things here so as to give us a rousing majority," he wrote. "I fear some of our folks are inclined to 'cut up dog.' . . . If you come here, you can make all right in a few minutes." David Davis added his plea to Wentworth's: "Go by all means. . . . Your political prosperity, it seems to me, may depend on your being in Chicago."³⁵

Any replies that Lincoln made to these appeals have not

been preserved. On March 1, the *Democrat* announced receipt of a letter written by him from New York indicating that he might be able to make one speech in Chicago before election day. But if Lincoln did momentarily consider returning to Illinois so soon after his appearance at Cooper Union, he discarded the idea in favor of a speaking tour through New England. Rumors of his impending arrival continued to circulate in Chicago, but when the voters went to the polls on March 7, he was still in Connecticut.³⁶

In spite of this disappointment, Wentworth's prospects began to brighten as the campaign drew to a close. With the city now officially designated as the site of the national convention, most of the disgruntled Republicans had come to acknowledge that victory was more important than their objections to the mayoral nominee. Long John's election, the party press emphasized, would be a stirring signal gun for the presidential contest and a severe rebuke to Douglas in his home town. Local issues and personalities were inconsequential in the great struggle between freedom and slavery.

By Saturday, March 3, a belated but powerful surge of enthusiasm had swept discord aside in the Republican ranks. Both Arnold and Haines spoke out for Wentworth. Trumbull telegraphed encouragement. Herndon arrived from Springfield, perhaps as a substitute for Lincoln, to address one of the interminable mass meetings. Carl Schurz, who had come down from Wisconsin to arouse the Germans, found Chicago "stand[ing] on its head" with excitement, and Long John commanding "like a field-marshal" in Republican headquarters. "Even the most quiet persons have lost their senses," he reported.³⁷

The most dramatic gesture in these last hectic days of the campaign came from Judd. Yielding to the pressure of popular opinion, he appeared at least twice upon the same platform with Wentworth to urge his election. And nothing more was heard of the libel suit. Its ultimate disposition is uncertain because the court records were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1871.³⁸

Once the Republicans had patched up their quarrels and achieved at least a semblance of unity, the election was hardly in doubt. When the ballots were counted, Wentworth had defeated his opponent by more than 1,200 votes, and the victory was widely acclaimed in party newspapers throughout the

country as a portent of success in the fall. The *Democrat* added a triumphant verse to one of the popular campaign songs:

Chicago has spoken in thunder,
And Freedom has chosen her gun;
'Tis a long and a strong piece of metal,
And called by the name of "Long John." 39

CHAPTER XI

The Harvest of Anger

A soldier in this war stands about as much chance of being killed as he does of being struck by lightning.—*John Wentworth, in a speech on April 18, 1861.*

THE NEW MAYOR devoted much of his inaugural address to a defense of his earlier administration, but Chicagoans were more interested in the immediate political significance of Wentworth's return to power in 1860. Would he honor the fragile truce that had been negotiated on the eve of the election, or resume the feud with his Republican enemies? The answer was not slow in coming. He remained as implacable as ever in his opposition to Judd. "I do not intend that he should be Governor *under any circumstances*," he informed Lincoln, and even Davis admitted that on this one subject, Wentworth was "insane almost."¹

The *Democrat*, returning to its old clamor against "disciples of Joel A. Matteson in the Republican ranks," argued that a down-state nominee would attract more votes in the southern counties. Swett was Wentworth's first choice, but he also took the trouble to encourage Richard Yates, whose prospects seemed the dimmest of the three major candidates.²

In addition, Long John still suspected Judd of conspiring to place Trumbull's name on the national ticket. He warned Lincoln again and again of the alleged plot, hinting broadly

that the Springfield leader needed guidance from a practical politician to offset his own artlessness. "Do like Seward does, get some one to *run* you," he advised.³ David Davis, circuit judge and a man of influence among the old-line Whigs, also began to visualize the editor of the *Democrat* as an Illinois counterpart of Thurlow Weed. "I am more & more convinced of the wonderful power of John Wentworth," he confided to Lincoln, after a visit to Chicago.

If he had managed the campaign in this State in 1858, I wd. have bet half I am worth that you would have been successful. . . . I am satisfied that he can really do more to advance your interests than any man in Illinois or out of it. . . .

Wentworth must be appointed one of the Delegates at large. I will vouch for his faithfulness. . . . You ought to have got him long ago to '*run you*.'⁴

In effect, Long John was offering Lincoln his undivided support in return for a seat in the Republican National Convention. As mayor of the host city, he was eager to play a prominent part in the proceedings, and he knew that Lincoln's voice would be decisive in the selection of the four delegates-at-large from Illinois. Davis, who encouraged his hopes, grew increasingly uneasy at the thought of their frustration. "There ought to be no mistake about Wentworth as one of the delegates," he reminded Lincoln. "He will help you—if he is—and if he is not could hurt you more than any man in the State. . . . Having spoken to Wentworth on the subject it would be suicidal now not to appoint him."⁵

But Lincoln, who was apparently losing interest in Wentworth's vagaries, made no commitment. At the same time, however, he silently rebuffed another appeal from Judd for open endorsement in the race for governor.⁶

The renewed warfare between Judd and Wentworth culminated in a battle for control of the county convention, which was scheduled to meet on April 30, for the purpose of appointing delegates to the state convention at Decatur. On the day of the primaries, Long John deployed the police force with his usual skill, but this time the balloting favored Judd, who spared neither energy nor expense in the desperate effort which carried him to victory.

Judd's supporters were therefore in full command when the county convention assembled, and the forty-six delegates that

it named were instructed to vote for him at Decatur. "Wentworth has been disgracefully beaten," one man wrote to Washburne, "and Judd has secured for himself without much doubt the nomination of Governor. . . . I am driven considerably this morning by men who are waiting to get me to take them to Judd for their pay for services rendered." Judd, too, believed that the worst crisis was over. "If I carry my own county I shall carry the convention," he had assured Trumbull.⁷

But Long John refused to admit defeat. The omission of his name from the list of delegates did not deter him from putting in an appearance at Decatur, where, during the pre-convention festivities on May 8, he made a speech attacking Judd and praising Swett as the "Henry Clay of the West." On the first ballot the next day, Judd was slightly ahead of the other two candidates, although well short of the necessary majority. Then Swett began to lose ground, and most of his supporters transferred their votes to Yates, who was nominated on the fifth ballot. Long John was delighted with the result. That his opposition had been an important factor in Judd's failure was generally acknowledged. "The defeat of Mr. Judd for the gubernatorial nomination, was a victory for Wentworth," asserted the *State Register*.⁸

It proved to be a costly victory, however. With the contest ended and his hopes crushed, Judd stepped before the Decatur delegates to deliver a generous speech of acquiescence which turned sentiment strongly in his favor. He was named a delegate-at-large to the national convention and retained as chairman of the state central committee. Furthermore, Peck was appointed to the same committee, while Long John was coldly overlooked in the assignment of honors and responsibilities. The troublesome and vindictive mayor of Chicago had apparently been excluded from the inner circle of party leadership. "He is today politically ruined," Judd reported to Lincoln, ". . . and I propose that all of your friends allow Cook Co. to deal with him. There is no need of any olive branch to him. . . . He can do no harm and I speak advisedly."⁹

Wentworth's resentment at these developments was mirrored in his editorial comments upon the approaching national convention. The *Democrat* had been one of the first newspapers in Illinois to suggest that Lincoln deserved consideration for the presidency, but more frequently it had visualized him as the vice-presidential running-mate of Houston, Dayton,

Chase, or even Seward, whom Long John had decided to forgive. This was not unusual. There were other Republican leaders in Illinois who secretly expected nothing better than second place on the ticket for their candidate. Judd himself was reported ready to switch to Ben Wade of Ohio in the presidential contest, whenever Lincoln's cause should prove to be hopeless.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Lincoln was obviously gaining strength throughout the country, and the Decatur convention had instructed Illinois delegates to "use all honorable means to secure his nomination." In such circumstances anything less than wholehearted support was looked upon as betrayal, and Wentworth's conduct during the final week before the national convention aroused the suspicion that he was playing a treacherous game.

The *Democrat* continued to speak highly of Lincoln. One editorial even proposed his nomination on the first ballot. But the paper also became increasingly favorable toward Seward. "If Seward's friends stand firm and persevere to the end, there is but little doubt of his nomination," it declared. "Great efforts are being made to bluff off the Seward men, by the cry that Gov. Seward cannot be elected. . . . The same cry is always raised at all Conventions by the lesser candidates against the greater." As the city began to fill up with party leaders, Long John was reported roaming through the crowded hotel lobbies to urge the nomination of Seward. Rumors said that he had reached an agreement with Thurlow Weed. "I for one think he [Wentworth] is a *dog*, and unworthy to be called a member of our party," growled Lincoln's friend, Mark Delahay.¹¹

In his own unique way, Wentworth dramatized the fact that he was the mayor of the convention city and responsible for the maintenance of order and propriety. On Sunday evening, May 13, he ordered one of his periodic raids upon the local brothels, and among the patrons arrested were several delegates to the convention. "Many of our citizens are indignant," observed one Chicagoan, "as we do not include the Calaboose in our festivities."¹²

But when the convention opened on Wednesday in the Wigwam, Long John was a mere spectator, while Judd held the center of the stage as the man who nominated Lincoln and helped engineer his victory on the third ballot. Confident that Seward would win, Wentworth was but one among millions who were amazed at the nomination of Lincoln and Hannibal

Hamlin. The *Democrat* hailed the choice as "singularly fortunate," adding that Hamlin's New England shrewdness would be especially valuable because Lincoln was "often liable to be imposed upon, from his disposition to consider every body as honest as himself." Judd insisted, however, that Long John had "actually cried with anger and disappointment," and Davis reported that he was still "sore" about the composition of the state central committee.¹³

Meanwhile, Republican optimism was augmented by Democratic disunity, which culminated in the nomination of Douglas by the Northern wing and John C. Breckinridge by the Southerners. With two presidential candidates of her own in the field, Illinois was a scene of continuous excitement from May until November. Young and old joined the colorful "Wide Awakes" and other marching organizations; pole-raising, picnics, and torchlight parades drew crowds of unprecedented size; fireworks and turpentine balls brightened the evening celebrations; booming cannon and blaring bands punctuated the torrential flow of campaign oratory. The American populace, about to speak in thunderous tones upon the great issue of the day, was clearing its throat, noisily.

Wentworth's behavior during the campaign was viewed with anger and suspicion by many leaders of his party. Republican strategy was necessarily aimed at winning the confidence of moderates in the North by dissociating the party from the doctrines of its abolitionist fringe, and by emphasizing other issues, such as homesteads, tariffs, and a Pacific railroad. Yet Long John obstinately refused to trim the radical sails which he had raised at the time of the John Brown raid. His editorials upon the subject of slavery during the summer and fall of 1860 might almost have been written by William Lloyd Garrison. The *Democrat* spoke repeatedly of the "irrepressible conflict." It demanded an immediate repeal of the Illinois "Black Laws" and a complete reorganization of the federal Supreme Court. Predicting a "Day of Jubilee" when Lincoln entered the White House, it declared: "No Constitutional provision is to be infringed; no State right is to be invaded; but the emancipation of four millions of human beings is to be achieved."¹⁴

In October, Wentworth identified himself even more closely with abolitionism by taking up the cause of the "Ottawa Rescuers," a group of men who had just been convicted of freeing a fugitive slave from the custody of a federal marshal.

Long John launched a vigorous campaign to raise money for their fines and court costs, and he berated the state central committee when it refused to contribute funds from the party treasury for that purpose. His efforts received flattering attention in the columns of the *Liberator*.¹⁵

Such conduct seemed to play directly into the hands of the opposition. Democratic newspapers like the *State Register* of Springfield and the New York *Herald* reprinted Wentworth's editorials with great relish. Here, they exclaimed, was true "Black Republicanism" without its mask; here was a foretaste of what Lincoln's election would mean!¹⁶

It was hard to believe that a man so renowned for his political cunning could be unaware of the damage he was causing. Many Illinois Republicans were convinced that Long John's clamorous radicalism was the trick of a spiteful saboteur. "Beware of Traitors!" warned the Greenville *Advocate*. "There is scarcely any room to doubt that Long John Wentworth, under the guise of friendship for the Republican party, is laboring to defeat its nominees, by attributing to them doctrines which they never held, and by creating the impression that the party is pledged to the abolition of slavery wherever it exists."¹⁷

Joseph Medill advised Lincoln that Wentworth was "working night and day" to undermine Republican strength.

His plan is to pretend that he is your devoted friend; that you are an ultra abolitionist who will if elected put down slavery in the South. He professes to adore the spirit of liberty. John Brown is worshiped by him. Chas Sumner is represented as tame compared with you. If he can make people in the North believe that you are a radical ultra fanatic he expects that it will drive the conservative moderate voters away from you. . . . While he is thus stabbing you, he is deluding a more radical anti-slavery element into the belief that he is a sincere abolitionist—that he believes what he says, and he is in consequence becoming quite a hero in their eyes.¹⁸

To counteract Long John's alleged treachery, Medill wrote letters to Eastern papers "exposing and denouncing him," while the *Press and Tribune* belabored him unmercifully in editorials. "His object," it asserted, "is to so identify Mr. Lincoln and the Republican movement with the Abolition party proper that they will fail in all the doubtful districts. We would be glad

to believe otherwise, but evidence is overwhelming that this is his purpose, or that the man is stark mad.”¹⁹

If Wentworth's radical pronouncements were in fact a deliberate attempt to embarrass the Republican cause, his main target was probably Lyman Trumbull rather than Lincoln. The inevitable suspicion that Long John had his eye upon Trumbull's seat in the Senate was strengthened by his unusual conduct during September. Republican leaders of Cook County had generally agreed upon William B. Ogden as the successor to Judd in the upper house of the state legislature, but soon the word spread through Chicago that Wentworth was himself a candidate for the position. And although he was conducting a vigorous editorial crusade for the reform of county governments, it seemed obvious that he really wanted to become a state senator in order to lead the fight against Trumbull's reelection.

There were angry reminders of his recent indignation at Arnold for aspiring to more than one office at a time, and the *Press and Tribune* solemnly protested that the city could not spare its mayor for service in Springfield. But Long John's supporters—a strange collection of orthodox Republicans and Irish Democrats—went stubbornly ahead with their efforts to secure his nomination. Once again the primary elections were decisive, and once again the Wentworth ticket was defeated. The convention which assembled in the Wigwam on September 25 nominated Ogden by acclamation. It also selected Wentworth's old enemy, J. Young Scammon, as one of the candidates for the lower house.²⁰

In spite of this rebuke to the *Democrat* and its editor, Trumbull's chances of being returned to the Senate remained dubious because of the inequitable legislative apportionment, which favored the Democrats. Wentworth's attempt to identify his party with abolitionism—most pronounced during the final month of the campaign—was perhaps partially aimed at cutting Republican strength in the critical central counties, where a slight shift in votes might defeat Trumbull without seriously handicapping Lincoln or Yates. But if such was his purpose, he never admitted it.

Seemingly more amused than angered by the charges leveled against him, Long John continued to speak in the voice of extremism, and to thrust his assistance upon the Republican leaders. In his official capacity as mayor, he formally welcomed

THE WILD CAT BANKERS IN COUNCIL.



They drink success to the War, and express a willingness, during its continuance, to flood the State with any quantity of irredeemable currency, in support of the families of the soldiers, during their absence to fight the battles of the country, and they respectfully ask our Legislature to let them have any quantity of State bonds at par for War purposes. And they also ask the "citizens and business men of Chicago to agree to receive and pay out as currency, in payment of debts and general transactions of business, during the present war, the notes of all and singular the banks which they have already established, or may hereafter establish, along the various creeks, bayous, and obscure streams, as well as in the various tracts of timber in this State, at present taken by the Wild Cat Association of this city, providing that they themselves always have the privilege of refusing to take the money as soon as they think they have got as much out as the community will stand, without giving previous notice of their intention."



Wentworth in his later years. The photograph on the right is from the New Hampshire Historical Society collections. The others courtesy Chicago Historical Society.

William H. Seward when the latter's speaking tour carried him into Chicago on October 1, and during the closing weeks of the campaign, he delivered speeches to enthusiastic audiences in both Illinois and Wisconsin. The *Aurora Beacon* described his effort in that city as "a noble vindication of the rights of man and the mission of the Republican party." The *Waukegan Gazette* found him "equal to his reputation."²¹

Wentworth greeted the Republican triumph at the polls on November 6 with a sigh of deep satisfaction and another hint that he was thinking of retirement. "We consider ourselves now at peace with 'all the world and the rest of mankind,'" he wrote. "The day of Jubilee has come. . . . Personally we intend to have a rest from the excitement of politics for the next four years." As for the new president: "May his Administration end in the liberation of those that are in bondage, and in the summary punishment of every man who makes any attempt at the dissolution of the Union."²²

The Republicans were interrupted in their celebration of victory by the ominous news that South Carolina and the other states of the Lower South were already taking the first steps toward secession, but Long John flatly refused to believe that the Union was actually imperiled. Like many other men who had spoken glibly about the "irrepressible conflict," he failed to recognize it when it arrived. Southerners liked to "bully, and brag and bluster," the *Democrat* scoffed, but in the end, they would "eat dirt." "These gentlemen are great on talking. They hold big meetings, pass big resolutions, make big speeches, and play 'big Injun' generally. . . . But there is no danger of secession! There is not spunk enough in the South to effect a rebellion. They are frightened yet by John Brown's ghost. Seventeen men can conquer a state full of chivalry, and they know it."²³

Wentworth was by no means the only Republican editor who underestimated Southern pride and desperation in the weeks immediately following Lincoln's election. The conviction that secession was an empty threat persisted in many minds until December 20, when chattering telegraph keys flashed the word to a startled nation that South Carolina had officially severed her ties with the United States of America. The confusion which then descended upon Washington was not diminished by the indecision of a heartsick and bewildered president. Nor was the angry tide of revolution stemmed by

frantic efforts of Congress to find some formula for compromise. Mississippi seceded on January 9. Florida and Alabama followed her example within two days. By early February, seven states had withdrawn from the Union, and a convention at Montgomery had established a provisional government, with Jefferson Davis as president.

In Chicago and other Northern cities, the talk on every street corner was of conciliation, coercion, and war. Should the seceding states be permitted to depart unchallenged? If not, should their return be encouraged by substantial concessions, or should it be compelled by military force? The North, and even the Republican party, seemed hopelessly divided upon these questions. "Union-saving" meetings, organized by the moderate elements in many communities, were answered by stern pronouncements from those who would offer no compromise and no quarter to "traitors."

Wentworth, to no one's surprise, advocated firmness and coercion. "There can be no such thing as peaceable secession," said the *Democrat* in January. "Prompt and efficient steps taken now, to crush out the rebellion in its infancy, will be far the best course to be adopted." As for compromise, the very word was "sickening." The "flunkey" Republicans who scurried to Union meetings were only feeding Southern arrogance. And the Crittenden peace plan before Congress was "a base surrender to slavery . . . a league with the powers of darkness." The South must not be bribed with promises that could never be kept. "Let us have no more foolish attempts at compromise between Right and Wrong, Truth and Error, Heaven and Hell. . . . The irrepressible conflict must go on: the war of Freedom against Slavery must be waged; the cursed institution must be extirpated."²⁴

But as the weeks passed, and the Southern Confederacy took shape without serious resistance from Washington, Long John's optimism and aggressiveness gradually wilted. By the middle of February, he had come to fear that the Union was "already lost." Republican congressmen seemed more interested in raising tariffs than in punishing rebellion, and even Lincoln's inauguration on March 4 brought no immediate end to federal inertia. Convinced by early April that military coercion of the seceded states was no longer feasible, Wentworth had just begun to advocate economic pressure as an alternative when Confederate guns opened fire upon Fort Sumter.²⁵

The news of Major Anderson's surrender set Chicago aflame with war excitement and restored the Garrisonian glint to Long John's eye. "Let the watchword now be our country, our whole country, and death to all traitors," the *Democrat* declared. "Founded upon injustice, cruelty, robbery and murder, the slave power has steadily progressed in its course of wickedness, until at last it has torn asunder the Union, disgraced our flag, and spilled the blood of our soldiers." ²⁶

Wentworth drew a comparison between the seizure of Fort Sumter and the raid upon Harper's Ferry. Jefferson Davis, he exclaimed, deserved the same punishment that had been visited upon John Brown. National honor cried aloud for vengeance upon "an organized gang of traitors, all of whom should be hung and not shot." ²⁷

At one of several tumultuous war meetings which he attended, Long John suggested a policy of "pay or go," and subscribed five hundred dollars toward the equipment of troops. There was no more danger in going to war, he assured volunteers, than in riding a railroad train. Memories of easy victories in Mexico had clouded his crystal. ²⁸

Lincoln's call for seventy-five thousand troops was far too modest, said the *Democrat*. Better a big, short war than a long, small one. Let a half million men, including Negroes, be summoned to crush the rebellion! There must be "no more dallying of the powers at Washington," Wentworth warned, or the people would "break all bounds themselves and punish these traitors, orders or no orders." ²⁹

The guns in Charleston Harbor, which transferred the sectional conflict from political platforms and legislative halls to the bloody field of battle, marked the close of a chapter in John Wentworth's personal history. In the turbulent days between Fort Sumter and Bull Run, his second term as mayor of Chicago and his long career as a newspaper editor both came to an end.

The excitement of national politics had diverted attention from municipal affairs in 1860, and Long John's administration for a time aroused less controversy than it had three years before. One of his proudest moments came upon a day in September when he acted as official host to the Prince of Wales, who had included Chicago in his North American tour at Wentworth's urgent request. It was perhaps this event which lured Marie away from Troy for an extended period of residence at

the Tremont House. Little Roxanna, now almost six, accompanied her mother on the visit, and Chicagoans were thus presented with the rare sight of Long John in the bosom of his family.³⁰

An unobtrusive exit from office was not to Wentworth's taste, however, and he managed to enliven his final months as mayor with a display of that wilful impudence which always amused some people while it infuriated others. At the beginning of his term, he had demonstrated his passion for economy by stripping police officers of their blue uniforms—introduced by Haines—and returning them to plain clothes, with leather badges as their only emblems of authority. More serious was his reduction of the police force to about one half its previous strength. This drastic action was blamed for an alarming increase in reported crimes during the latter part of 1860, and mounting dissatisfaction in the city finally led to intervention by the state legislature. An act passed in February, 1861, divested the mayor of all control over the police, lodging it instead with a new three-man commission, whose first members were to be appointed by Governor Yates.³¹

To Long John the statute was both an outrageous interference with local self-government and an insulting reflection upon his performance as mayor. He dramatized his displeasure in a startling way on the night of March 25. The new commissioners held their first official meeting that evening, but made no immediate move to exercise the powers vested in them. By waiting until after the municipal election, they hoped to avoid a clash with Wentworth and at the same time postpone to a more propitious hour the delicate task of selecting a new police force from among fifteen hundred hungry applicants. But Long John had other plans. Soon after the commissioners adjourned, he called all the policemen together, delivered a long harangue against the new system, and then dismissed the entire force!

Chicagoans awoke the next morning to find themselves without police protection of any kind, except for a few special constables appointed to guard city property.irate editors and other citizens poured abuse upon the mayor for his rash action. The Board of Commissioners held an emergency meeting. Visions of a city turned over to criminals frightened some businessmen and householders. Soon, however, the necessary appointments were made, and officers patrolled the streets once more.³²

Meanwhile, Wentworth had stirred up another controversy over the date of his departure from office. Again his resentment was directed at the recent session of the legislature, which had snubbed his advice while enacting a number of amendments to the Chicago charter. One revision moved the time of the city election from early March to the middle of April. Long John argued on certain technical grounds that it would be unconstitutional to make this change in 1861. He indicated at first that he might quit his duties in March, leaving Chicago without a mayor, but when this threat failed to produce any signs of public anguish, he shifted his strategy. The first days of April found him still holding office and claiming the right to do so until the spring of 1862. The people of Chicago, he asserted, had waived their privilege of electing a new mayor in March, and now only one legal alternative remained. He—John Wentworth—must shoulder the burden for another twelve months. “No Election This Year,” proclaimed the *Democrat*.³³

Local Republican leaders were disconcerted by these arguments, but they went nervously ahead with plans for a convention on April 13. Wentworth, while insisting that the entire procedure was contrary to the state constitution, betrayed some hope that this allegedly unlawful meeting would nominate him for another term. He chose this particular moment to issue a boastful report on the financial condition of the city and the achievements of his administration. “The people are to decide in a few days whether the policy of Mayor Wentworth shall be continued in our city or not,” said the *Democrat*. “Should he hold over, or his principles be continued, there is no question but the taxes of the people will be no more next year than they were this.”³⁴

When the convention assembled on the appointed day, however, it nominated Julian S. Rumsey for mayor. Long John received exactly one vote. What course he might have followed after this rebuff can only be conjectured. There had been some fear among Republicans that he would either try to prevent the election on April 16, or else throw his support to the opposition candidate. But if he harbored any such intentions, the news from Fort Sumter swept them away. Rumsey was carried to victory on a wave of patriotic fervor, and Long John, suppressing his doubts about the legality of the election, quietly vacated his office on May 6.³⁵

He turned his attention immediately to the *Democrat*, which had been living on borrowed time ever since Bradley's death in 1857. Admittedly an "old foggy" paper, a relic of Chicago's simpler and cruder past, it was holding its patrons with difficulty and losing money every week. Urban journalism had become a big business, and Long John readily conceded that the city had outgrown his "ability to keep up with it in the newspaper line."³⁶

The death of the *Democrat* may have been hastened, moreover, by several incidents in the spring of 1861 which served as painful reminders to Wentworth that an editor's life was a hazardous one. Traveling from Springfield to Washington in February, Lincoln had slipped quietly through Baltimore in the middle of the night because of rumors that he would be assassinated in that city. The alleged conspiracy had been uncovered by Allan Pinkerton, the Chicago detective hired to guard the president-elect on his journey. Long John, who had always held private detectives in great contempt, denounced the entire adventure as a hoax, perpetrated by Pinkerton in order to advertise himself and his agency. The bad feeling engendered by these derisive comments reached a climax several weeks later when Pinkerton accosted his hulking critic on a Chicago street and, according to one biased account, thoroughly "thrashed" him. "Thus passed another important epoch in the eventful life of John Wentworth," observed the *Chicago Post*. "If he cannot boast of the scars received in a hundred battles, he can at least tell of the bruises received in a good many floggings."³⁷

Even more frightening than physical assaults were libel suits, to which Long John was especially vulnerable because of his acid pen and extensive wealth. With secession precipitating another financial crisis in Chicago, he had resumed his tirades against the banking system. In April the *Democrat* printed a cartoon entitled, "The Wild Cat Bankers in Council," with one of the "cats" easily identifiable as J. Young Scammon, president of the Marine Bank. Profiting from the example set by Judd, his friend and former law partner, Scammon retaliated by suing Wentworth for a quarter of a million dollars. Although it was apparently settled out of court in the end, this suit may have been the final thrust which drove Long John into retirement.³⁸

He sold out to the *Tribune*, keeping both his building and

equipment, but pledging not to publish another paper before March of 1864. It is unlikely that any money changed hands. The *Tribune* simply acquired his subscription list and assumed his unfulfilled obligations to subscribers. The final issue appeared on July 27, 1861, and then Chicago's first newspaper spoke no more. Even among its worst enemies there may have been some secret regret at the silence which had descended upon Jackson Hall.³⁹

CHAPTER XII

Fading Star

The city of Chicago has not only outgrown Wentworth in dignity and moral stature, but it has outgrown his peculiar style of electioneering.—CHICAGO TRIBUNE, *September 22, 1866.*

PATRIOTISM AND AMBITION swept many Northern political leaders into military service against the Confederacy, but Long John's name was not among them. Forty-six years old in 1861, with a bulging waistline and a distaste for physical exertion, he was suited neither in body nor in temperament for the rigors of army life.

His enemies had often charged him with cowardice. Yet he had suffered assaults upon his person again and again without ever curbing the mordant tongue which provoked them. And one newspaperman has testified to seeing him "ride directly into the thick of an ugly Irish mob in the old 'bloody Seventh' Ward, when partisan fury was at the boiling point, and emerge unharmed, smiling his grim Mephistophelian smile all the time."¹

More than fear, it was a deep-set repugnance for physical violence that made him almost a nonresistant and, consequently, an object of much scorn in a society whose most respected leaders frequently settled disputes with fists or even firearms. There is no record of his striking the first blow in any fight, and when attacked, he seldom did more than raise his

arms to protect himself. Perhaps he had learned long ago from schoolyard scuffles that there was no credit either in winning or in losing for a boy who towered far above his opponents.

That he ever seriously considered offering his huge frame as a target for Southern sharpshooters is almost unlikely. According to a story—more credible than demonstrably authentic—which circulated many years later, Wentworth, soon after the firing on Fort Sumter, sought out a friend who had fought in the Mexican War.

“What does a colonel do in battle?” he asked.

“He goes in at the head of his regiment and stays with it,” was the reply.

“And what does a brigadier general do?”

“He goes in with his brigade—keeps right along with his men.”

At this point Long John is said to have rubbed his chin and sighed. But the answer to his next question was more encouraging. A major general, he was informed, might command an army. In that case, he would not go into the midst of the fighting, but would sit astride his horse at a distance, or issue orders from his headquarters in some near-by house.

“Well,” said Long John, “that would suit me better. I guess I’ll be a major general or nothing.” Then, after a moment of silence, he waved his long arms and exclaimed, “Great heavens above! If I had physical courage equal to my moral courage, I would make a splendid commander.”²

No longer a newspaper editor, retired from public office, unfitted for a military career, Wentworth found himself a mere spectator for the first time in twenty-five years. The days of relaxation to which he had looked forward with such pleasure were now a reality. But in a setting of feverish war preparations, idleness soon became oppressive to him. His “vacation from politics” lasted only a few months.

Long John remained a staunch Republican in his attitude toward slavery and secession, but the party’s emerging economic program was not reassuring to an old Jacksonian of Loco-foco tendencies. During the recent presidential campaign, the *Democrat* had issued an angry warning to those former Whigs who were trying to revive the doctrines of Henry Clay:

We see great efforts making to turn this Republican party, which is founded altogether on opposition to slavery, into a

second edition of old blue-light federalism and whiggery. We see efforts made to lug high protective tariff doctrines into it; to ring in a lot of old fossil know-nothings and old whigs into it by bribery of good fat offices, and influential propositions, while old free soilers are left shivering out in the cold. Bye and bye, we may expect to see efforts made to have a national bank plank added to the platform, and then the party will have emerged from its chrysalis condition into a full blown federal, whig party. If this is the intention of some of our so called Republicans they may count us out.³

The Morrill tariff, approved in March, 1861, raised duties only moderately, but to Wentworth it was "as much the entering wedge to split the East from the West as the slavery question was the North from the South." The final result, he added, might be an independent Northwestern republic, which would ally itself closely with Canada and give New York and New England "the complete go-by."⁴

The financial disturbance which accompanied the secession crisis in the spring of 1861 turned Long John's wrath upon the banking system again. Notes of Illinois banks were secured by stocks and bonds—many of them Southern—deposited with the auditor at Springfield. As the market value of these securities declined, the notes themselves became unreliable, and few banks could continue redeeming them at par. Workingmen forced to accept their wages in depreciated paper were the worst victims of the panic. Bewildered and resentful, they gathered in little groups to discuss their plight. "There is great danger of a mob in our city," the *Democrat* declared, with grim satisfaction. "Arouse, laborers, arouse! It is your sweat, it is your toil that aggrandizes the Wild Cat aristocracy of Chicago. They are fattening upon your blood. The remedy is in your hands! Arouse! Arouse! . . . Reader! if you have a dollar of Illinois currency with you, delay not a moment until you are rid of it."⁵

So violent were his editorials, that Wentworth was accused of attempting to incite a riot. The local Board of Trade censured him in a special resolution, and he was sued for libel by the city's leading banker, J. Young Scammon. But the *Democrat* continued to denounce banks of issue and paper money until its sale to the *Tribune* in July.⁶

To his great annoyance, however, Wentworth found Republicans in Illinois less repelled than most Democrats by the

sins of the bankers. He revealed in one speech the political dilemma confronting him when he complained that "men who were sound on the banking question were rotten on the negro question, and men who were sound on the negro question were rotten on the banking question."⁷

In the autumn of 1861, Long John was presented with an opportunity to escape from the boredom of political retirement and, at the same time, strike a blow for financial reform. It was generally agreed that the state constitution, established in 1848, needed revision. The Illinois electorate had approved the calling of a convention for that purpose, and the legislature had fixed January 7, 1862, as the date of its first session in Springfield. At the election in November, Wentworth was one of four delegates chosen to represent Cook County.⁸

To Republicans, the statewide results of the contest were a severe shock. The war had blurred party lines, and many delegates, Wentworth included, were elected on "Union" tickets. But more than two thirds of the victorious candidates proved to be Democrats, who cast aside all pretense of nonpartisanship when the convention assembled.⁹

With men from the southern counties dominating the proceedings through their control of the Democratic caucus, the convention, from its opening session, adopted an attitude which aroused angry suspicion among persons devoted to the Union and the prosecution of the war. Ignoring their instructions from the legislature, a majority of the delegates attempted to assume the unlimited powers of a provisional government.

The convention pointedly refused to swear its support of the old constitution. It badgered the Yates administration with inquiries and directives. It investigated alleged frauds in the state's military program. It appropriated money, voted a bond issue, and repealed laws enacted by the legislature. It ratified, with dubious authority, a proposed amendment to the federal Constitution which would have protected slavery in the states. It reduced the governor's term of office from four years to two and scheduled a general election for the following November. Most controversial of all, its legislative and congressional reapportionments of the state were shameless Democratic gerrymanders. Small wonder that it should be denounced in Republican newspapers as a dangerous gathering of copperhead conspirators!¹⁰

Bargaining about "like a big frigate among a lot of gunboats," Wentworth was one of the most vocal and industrious members of the convention. But a stranger could not have guessed from his behavior that he still claimed to be a Republican. He joined eagerly in the harassment of Yates, berated the recent session of the legislature, and voted more often than not with the Democratic majority. When the constitution was finally completed late in March, he was one of only three Republicans who affixed their signatures. Then he hurried home to campaign for its adoption in the face of almost universal opposition from the newspapers of his party.¹¹

In Republican circles it was whispered that Long John had secretly sold his services to the Democrats for their promise of a seat in the United States Senate. No such inducement was necessary, however. The article on banking and currency, which he had helped to write, was enough in itself to win his support of the proposed constitution. It forbade the creation of any new banks in the state and so curbed the activities of those already established that it threatened their very existence. The same article also placed an outright prohibition upon the issue or circulation of paper currency in Illinois after the year 1866.¹² Even the most fanatic advocates of hard money could have asked for little more.

Many other features of the completed document were pleasing to Wentworth, among them a mechanic's lien clause, included at his request, and a provision forbidding the release of the Illinois Central from its financial obligations to the state. The convention, moreover, had yielded to his demands for a special ordinance returning the Chicago police to mayoral control, thereby abolishing the independent commission created the previous year.¹³

As one of its satisfied authors, Long John was therefore prepared to defend the new constitution. But for most Republicans, opposition to the "Egyptian swindle" became a test of loyalty to party and nation.

Chicago Republicans, at their municipal convention in April, 1862, approved a resolution condemning the constitution and its framers. They also brushed aside efforts to nominate Wentworth for mayor, selecting former Alderman Charles N. Holden instead. Vexed at this twin disappointment, some of Long John's adherents threw their support to the Democratic nominee, Francis C. Sherman, who was elected by a majority

of nearly twelve hundred votes. The editors of the *Tribune* blamed the Republican defeat—the first in the city since 1856—upon Wentworth's defection, and read him out of the party.¹⁴

As the date for the popular referendum upon the constitution drew near, Long John allied himself ever more openly with the Democrats to work for its adoption. He apparently contributed editorials on the subject to the *Chicago Times*, which was becoming notorious for its savage criticism of the Lincoln administration. And in the climactic days of debate just before the election, he visited several predominantly Democratic mass meetings to hurl some final maledictions at the banking system. Lumbering to the speaker's table on one occasion, he pulled from his pockets a handful of gold and a bundle of torn, greasy bills. In which kind of money, he demanded, would the laborers of the city rather be paid? Then, after a pause to fix the audience with his familiar satanic scowl, he bellowed: "I vote for coin!"¹⁵

On June 17, 1862, as the nation anxiously awaited the outcome of McClellan's Peninsular campaign, the people of Illinois went to the polls and rejected their proposed new frame of government by more than sixteen thousand votes. The balloting upon the banking section, submitted separately, was much closer, but it likewise failed. Only the articles restricting the rights of free Negroes were approved. "Illinois," exulted the *State Journal*, "is saved from the grasp of traitors."¹⁶

It was a partisan, and therefore a sectional, decision. Yet Chicago, unlike the northern half of the state in general, gave majorities of 995 votes for the constitution and 1,241 for the bank proposition. Long John's influence upon this surprising result was not denied. The clamor against "stump tail" currency had been highly effective in many urban areas, so Joseph Medill reported to Yates. "Wentworth threw himself among the rabble and swept away with him 1200 votes in Cook, Will and LaSalle."¹⁷

To Long John, the most distressing consequence of the adverse vote—aside from the reprieve granted to banks of issue in Illinois—was the nullification of his ordinance dissolving the Chicago Board of Police. The disappointment proved to be a fortunate one, however, for this commission which he had tried to destroy would eventually serve as his steppingstone back into national politics.

Yet in the summer of 1862, he faced a bleak political future.

With the *Democrat* silenced, his voice had lost much of its power, his wrath much of its sting. By supporting the "copperhead constitution," he had stamped himself as an incorrigible renegade in many Republican eyes, while the Democrats, despite rumors to the contrary, were unwilling to repose any real trust in a self-confessed disciple of John Brown. Knowing his ability to influence voters, both parties were ready to exploit his services, but knowing also his unpredictable independence when given authority, neither was anxious to nominate him for office.

In his attitude toward the Lincoln administration, Wentworth was curiously ambivalent. The man who had frustrated his desire to be a member of the national convention in 1860, who had chosen Norman Judd as the American minister to Berlin, and who, in 1863, elevated Ebenezer Peck to a federal judgeship, could hardly command his devoted personal allegiance. During the war and afterwards, any remarks that Long John made about Abraham Lincoln were likely to be a mixture of conventional praise and sly depreciation.¹⁸

Yet on the great issue of suppressing the rebellion, he was an unwavering supporter of the president. The Emancipation Proclamation received his enthusiastic endorsement. The utterances of the "Peace Democrats" filled him with indignation and disgust. Speaking at a series of Union meetings in April of 1863, he declared that one party had gone to war, while the other had remained at home to find fault. He denounced all proposals for a negotiated peace and called upon Democrats to prove their loyalty by outdoing Republicans in the killing of rebels.¹⁹

Wentworth was eager to recover his standing as an orthodox Republican, and in the municipal election of 1863, he supported the Union candidate, Thomas Bryan, against his Democratic friend, Mayor Francis Sherman. The latter was nevertheless re-elected—this time for a two-year term—by the narrow margin of 157 votes. Stunned Chicago Republicans rent the air with anguished charges of fraud, but Long John, having done his duty, was probably not unduly disconsolate at the result.²⁰

Another full year passed, and Wentworth seemed permanently relegated to the role of spectator in Illinois politics. Then, to the consternation of his enemies, a succession of accidents suddenly cleared the way for his return to political prom-

inence. The first of these events occurred on June 10, 1864, when John S. Newhouse resigned from the Chicago Board of Police. Three days later, Mayor Sherman nominated Wentworth to fill the vacancy, and the Common Council did not recover from its astonishment until after it had voted confirmation. Long John did not hesitate to sacrifice consistency for opportunity. He accepted the appointment without a trace of embarrassment, and was soon the most vocal member of the commission.²¹

By this time the presidential campaign of 1864 had begun. At Baltimore, on June 7, a "National Union Convention" had nominated Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson. But certain radicals in the Republican ranks, angered by the president's rejection of the Wade-Davis plan for reconstructing the South, were intriguing to replace him as Republican standard-bearer. The Democrats, scheduled to convene at Chicago on August 29, were also divided. With Grant still frustrated in his bloody efforts to destroy Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, a wave of war weariness was spreading across the nation, lending strength to demands for a negotiated peace. The Chicago convention promised to become a battleground between the "war" and "peace" factions of the already crippled Democracy.

The races for congressional seats, too, excited unusual interest in this critical election year. In the Chicago district, Republican supremacy was endangered by the development of a bitter rivalry between Congressman Isaac N. Arnold and Postmaster John Locke Scripps. Arnold was now serving his second term in the House of Representatives and hoped to be re-elected. Writing to Lincoln, he complained that Scripps was making improper use of his office in an attempt to win the Republican nomination for himself. Lincoln responded with an admonitory letter to the postmaster, but the latter's opposition to Arnold only became more venomous as a result. The quarrel had reached such proportions by the end of July that party harmony seemed to depend upon the withdrawal of both men from the contest.²²

But the Arnold-Scripps deadlock was still unbroken a month later when Democrats began pouring into Chicago for their national convention. The most notorious figure among early arrivals was the former Ohio congressman, Clement L. Vallandigham. A year earlier, this conscientious but headstrong leader of the Peace Democrats had been convicted of "dis-

loyal" behavior by a military tribunal. Lincoln, however, had commuted his sentence to banishment within Confederate lines. Escaping from the South and returning to the United States by way of Canada, Vallandigham, in utter defiance of the federal government, had resumed his open denunciation of the war program. A spokesman for the Ohio Valley region, his goal was not a Confederate victory, but an immediate truce and re-establishment of the "old Union," with its emphasis upon states' rights.

At a pre-convention rally in the courthouse square the evening of August 26, a motley gathering of five thousand people listened for over an hour to a typical Vallandigham diatribe against the Lincoln administration. When the oracle of copperheadism had finished his speech, Republicans in the crowd called for a rejoinder. Police Commissioner Wentworth, who had attended the meeting to see that order was maintained, promptly stepped forward to comply.

No man, Long John asserted, was more hungry for peace than he. But victory remained the one honorable road to peace, the only alternative to a "shameful" surrender. "I have listened with great interest," he continued, "to the eloquent and well-considered remarks of that peculiarly democratic champion who has just addressed you from the stand."

I have heard him bewail, in feeling, touching terms, the existence and continuance of this 'accursed war.' . . . But while he was thus deprecating war and violence, I listened in vain for one single breath of censure, one word of reproof from his lips, of those who first madly unchained the ugly demon, and let loose the storm of deadly hate. . . .

Why this omission, why this studied silence on the part of Mr. Vallandigham? Why are his invectives directed solely to the General Government which, when assailed, only then attacked? Does Mr. Vallandigham wish to be understood that the act of the traitors in opening the strife is not worthy of censure, while the act of the Government in opposing force to force is entitled to an hour's [in]temperate denunciation? . . .

But Mr. Vallandigham tells us to accept peace, to stop fighting, and negotiate for a reconstruction. . . . If we want peace then let us conquer. If the South want peace let them lay down their arms and cease war. Then will I be willing to deal with them justly and generously. Then will I try to forget the rivers of Northern blood they have shed in their unholy struggle for slavery. . . .

But Vallandigham told you that the Government could never be held together by coercive force, that power brought to apply upon the unruly could never reduce them to obedience. Was there ever a greater heresy uttered by the mouth of man? No coercion! Why gentlemen, the coercive power of Government is the only safety and salvation of society. No government, no community can exist an hour without it. . . . That glorious old war horse of Democracy, General Jackson, from whose lips I inhaled the pure inspiration of Democracy, and at whose feet I received the first lessons of political and governmental duty, was gloriously free from this modern heresy. His celebrated proclamation against the nullifiers, in which 'coercion' gleamed and glistened in every line, will give him a name and an immortality in history, when the maligners and denunciators of his policy shall have been forgotten. I therefore stand for General Jackson and against Vallandigham. Will you stand for Vallandigham and against General Jackson?

But I will not press the matter further. The attention you have given me fills me with gratitude. . . . Our interests are one, our hopes are identical. Let us therefore meet and discuss this matter in a spirit of fraternal love, and good will flow from the interchange of opinion . . . let us push on in the race of civilization and progress, and reach the summit of greatness and glory, a proud example of a free, enlightened, and tolerant people, who love Union, Liberty, and Law; who, when their country was assailed, defended it, and when treason reared its bloody banner, beat it back, and handed down to posterity the rich legacy of their fathers.²³

Scattered jeers of dissent were drowned in the thunderous applause that followed Long John as he left the speaker's stand. Overnight, he became a Republican hero—the man who had met and vanquished the leading prophet of defeatism. And with the district convention only a few days away, party leaders were dramatically presented with a solution for the Arnold-Scripps problem. Why not send Wentworth back to Congress?

On September 1, 1864—the day after General George B. McClellan received the Democratic nomination for president—Chicago Republicans held a great mass meeting in Metropolitan Hall. Long John was one of the last speakers on the program, and when he concluded his remarks, Elliott Anthony sprang up to lead three cheers for "John Wentworth, our next Congressman, and the political crucifier of the infamous Vallandigham." In the same building the following afternoon, Wentworth was nominated by the district convention.²⁴

September 2, 1864—the day of Long John’s convention victory—brought the stirring news that Sherman’s army was entering Atlanta. This achievement lifted Northern morale and brightened Republican hopes of winning the election. The Democrats in the first congressional district of Illinois made Wentworth’s task even easier by nominating Cyrus H. McCormick to oppose him. A confirmed Peace Democrat, the reaper king could not capitalize upon the lingering anti-Wentworth feeling among certain Republicans. The contest was spirited and acrimonious, but its outcome was hardly in doubt.²⁵

The atmosphere was doubly tense on election day in Chicago, because federal troops had just arrested the leading conspirators in a plot to release Confederate prisoners from nearby Camp Douglas. With soldiers standing guard at the polls on November 8, the city contributed a majority of nearly eighteen hundred votes to Lincoln’s re-election. Wentworth carried Chicago by over a thousand, and the district by over four thousand, to win his sixth term in the House of Representatives.²⁶

Thirteen months intervened, however, between Long John’s election and the day that he took his seat in Congress. During that period, momentous events deflected American history into a new channel. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, the war ended, and Lincoln fell before the pistol of an assassin. In a setting of shock and confusion, the nation’s leaders found themselves abruptly confronted with the problem of consummating peace and restoring the federal Union.

President Andrew Johnson, after a brief display of vindictiveness toward the prostrate South, soon embraced the magnanimous reconstruction program which Lincoln had already inaugurated. By December, 1865, most of the Confederate states had fulfilled the requirements of the presidential plan, and their newly elected congressional delegations were awaiting admission to the House and Senate. From the president’s viewpoint, the process of restoration was almost completed.

But a group of strong-willed men among the returning legislators was preparing to demolish the edifice of reconciliation that Johnson had so laboriously raised. Thaddeus Stevens and his cohorts held far different views of how defeated rebels ought to be treated, and they looked upon Johnson’s efforts as a usurpation of legislative authority. When the Thirty-ninth

Congress met on December 4, the battle lines were clearly drawn between the president and the radical Republicans.

Time and war had brought many changes to Washington in the ten years since Wentworth's last term in Congress. The population of the city had doubled; its tempo of life had quickened. Inside the halls of the enlarged Capitol, with its new wings and great dome, he found a few old acquaintances among the many strangers. But the absence of so many familiar faces—Cobb, Toombs, Benton, Cass, Douglas—poignantly reminded him of the revolution that had taken place in the nation's political leadership, and of the fact that he himself, at fifty years of age, was now a member of the older generation.

Visiting Washington the previous March, Long John had heard Lincoln's second inaugural address, with its noble plea for a compassionate attitude toward the South. At the same time, however, he had discussed reconstruction policies with several radical Republicans, and they had found him a receptive listener. At the opening-day session on December 4, he aligned himself with Stevens against the seating of representatives from the former Confederate states. From that time until adjournment the following July, he voted consistently for the measures by which a relentless Congress overrode the president and inaugurated its own more severe reconstruction program.²⁷

The first and second Freedmen's Bureau bills, the Civil Rights bill, the Fourteenth Amendment—all received his support. His name is even recorded among a small minority who vainly attempted to close the doors of West Point to citizens of the unreconstructed states. More than once he admitted his complete submission to the despotic leadership of Thaddeus Stevens. "There is no man in this House who has followed him so blindly as I have," Long John declared.²⁸

Wentworth was therefore a radical Republican, but a strangely passive one. He made no speeches on reconstruction and at times seemed barely interested in the whole subject. Appointed to the important Committee on Ways and Means, he gave most of his attention to financial problems. Here he was less in tune with the spirit of postwar America, reflecting in his attitudes both the old Locofoco repugnance for easy money and the emerging protest of Western agrarians against a national economy tailored to fit the needs of industrial capital.

With the war ended, Congress moved swiftly to diminish the burden of internal taxes, but it showed less enthusiasm for a reduction of import duties. Manufacturers wanted higher, not lower tariffs, and the bill which their spokesman, Justin Morrill, reported from committee in June, 1866, was intended to perpetuate and strengthen the principle of protection. Provisions for higher duties on certain agricultural products failed to neutralize the opposition of congressmen from the upper Mississippi Valley. Wentworth was speaking for that entire section when he depicted the Western farmer as a martyr to the tariff system:

He first undertakes to fence in his land, and the spade with which he digs the hole for a post is taxed; the ax with which he cuts the post to put in the hole is taxed; the boards he puts on the posts to make his fence are taxed; the nails with which he fastens on the boards are taxed; and the hammer with which he drives the nails is taxed. When the fence is done and the man goes inside to work his plow is taxed, his hoe is taxed, his cultivator is taxed, his reaper or mower is taxed, and everything he uses is taxed. And for the benefit of whom? For the protection of American manufacturers.²⁹

Although he still preferred a revenue tariff, Long John was a realist rather than a doctrinaire on the subject. Recognizing that some degree of protection was inevitable and even desirable, he asked only that it be moderate, and that its blessings be extended to the farmer. He joined other members of the Western bloc in resisting efforts to cut the proposed duties on agricultural products, and in securing some reductions on manufactured goods. But when the Morrill measure was returned to the House after running the gamut of Senate amendments, he decided that it offered little improvement over the wartime schedules. In the roll call upon final passage, he voted reluctantly with the opposing minority.³⁰

Explaining his action in a long speech the same day, July 10, Wentworth proposed that the tariff be taken "out of politics" by the creation of a "sensible and honest commission," invested with full power to fix rates. Congress was never willing to go that far, but an act approved only three days later, creating the office of "Special Commissioner of the Revenue" for David A. Wells, promised a thorough study of the tariff system by an expert economist. The Senate, to Long John's great satisfaction, had meanwhile shelved the Morrill bill for

the duration of the session. A better measure, he hoped, would be substituted for it when Congress reconvened in December.³¹

Wentworth's interest in tariff revision was no more intense than his zeal for sound money. He gave eloquent support to Secretary of the Treasury Hugh McCulloch when the latter proposed to facilitate an early resumption of specie payments (suspended in 1861) by reducing the volume of depreciated paper currency in circulation. But McCulloch's plan encountered strong opposition in Congress, not only from inflationists, but also from moderates like Thaddeus Stevens who feared the economic consequences of rapid greenback contraction. Sharp words passed between Wentworth and Stevens on the subject. "I trusted the gentleman on negro suffrage," said Long John, "and I want him to trust me on finance. Let him play fair." In the end, however, Congress passed a compromise loan bill which authorized the funding of short-term interest-bearing paper, but permitted only a very limited retirement of greenbacks. Thirteen years later, when the government finally resumed specie payments, James A. Garfield reminded a Chicago audience of the "clearness and boldness" with which Wentworth, in 1866, had predicted the evils that would flow from "timid and half-way" monetary policies.³²

America, in 1866, was entering its expansive, predatory age of industrial miracles and robber barons. Tables were being set for the "Great Barbecue," and the first guests had begun to arrive. Wentworth, always an advocate of prudence and economy in the expenditure of public money, viewed the frenzied preparations with grim foreboding. Several times during the session, he denounced the swarm of lobbyists and claims agents that infested the Capitol. On one occasion he braved the stinging ridicule of Thad Stevens to demand their exclusion from the very floor of the House.³³

In harmony with his passion for government economy, Long John opposed a bill for the increase of congressional salaries. And like his constituents, he was becoming less sympathetic to the importunate appeals of the railroads. He voted against additional federal aid to the floundering Northern Pacific, and he refused to support a charter and land grant for the Atlantic and Pacific until the names of several congressmen had been removed from the list of corporators. In spite of his numerous shortcomings, the generation of *Crédit Mobilier* and

the Whiskey Ring scandals needed congressmen like John Wentworth.³⁴

Yet when Long John returned to Chicago after adjournment late in July, 1866, he found his path to re-election obstructed by a familiar Republican clique which was prepared to see only the blemishes in his legislative record. The *Tribune*, now edited by Horace White, a dedicated free trader, accused him of vacillation on the tariff issue. His abstention from the debates on reconstruction was interpreted as apathy, and he was depicted as a penny-pinching enemy of needy war veterans. In personal behavior, he was even more vulnerable. Critics pointed to his habit of playing the clown, to his excessive absences from roll call, and to his heavy consumption of whiskey. "We are very far from raising a temperance issue in the present campaign," the *Tribune* snarled, ". . . but in a case where shameful exhibitions of intemperance are coupled with no evidences of practical statesmanship, no influence with other members of Congress, no efforts to promote the local interests of the district, and nothing but buffoonery, we say that we prefer to sustain Congress by sustaining our own self-respect."³⁵

Soon after he arrived home from Washington, Wentworth attended a reception for Senator Lyman Trumbull at the Opera House. The elite of Chicago society filled the hall, and Long John's old adversary, J. Young Scammon, was chosen to act as chairman. After the featured addresses by Trumbull and Schuyler Colfax, a group of well-placed "clackers" began to call Wentworth's name. But Scammon jumped to his feet with the announcement that no uninvited intruders would be permitted to speak. The meeting, he declared, was adjourned. A lengthy roar of disapproval issued from the crowd before it finally dispersed. Unabashed by the snub, Long John stood at the exit shaking hands with the departing throng, a picture of "injured innocence."³⁶

Worse indignities were in store for him. The *Tribune* faction of Chicago Republicans had not only vetoed his renomination, but picked as his successor the late minister to Prussia, Norman B. Judd.

Judd, contrary to all his hopes, had been removed from his diplomatic post soon after Johnson became president. Rightly or wrongly, he attributed his downfall to Wentworth's malign influence. "A certain writer who usually signs himself 'J. W.'"

has rather prompt revenge," he complained in a letter to Trumbull.³⁷

With Long John seeking re-election to Congress, and a vindictive Judd returning from Berlin to challenge him, the stage was set for the final act of their notorious feud. The *Tribune* was careful not to give the impression of dictating the Republican nomination, but as early as August 19, Trumbull wrote to his brother-in-law: "It is pretty well settled that Judd will be a candidate against Wentworth & I guess will beat him."³⁸

This prophecy proved to be accurate. If the *Tribune's* biased reporting can be trusted, Long John crippled his own cause the evening of October 1 when he attended a public meeting at the Tremont House in a state of "offensive" intoxication. "The fact that he could not keep sober under such circumstances," the paper sneered, "might well lead to the conclusion that strong drink has at last acquired the mastery over him." In the primary elections on October 9, Wentworth swept the rural areas, but was overwhelmed in the city. Altogether, the voters of the district chose 126 Judd delegates, and only 104 who favored Long John. The convention met the following day and nominated Judd, despite strenuous resistance from Wentworth's adherents. In the November election, Judd won an easy victory over his Democratic opponent.³⁹

Thus, for the fifth time in his career, Wentworth had been retired from office by the members of his own party. His mortification at being unseated by Judd was partially offset by a feeling of relief at his approaching release from public responsibilities. Thinking of the farm to which he could once more devote his full attention, he did not fail to compare himself with Cincinnatus returning to the plow. But first he must complete his term by attending the second session of the Thirty-ninth Congress.

The results of the 1866 elections amounted to popular endorsement of radical reconstruction and a crushing repudiation of Andrew Johnson. The Southern states were meanwhile in the process of rejecting, almost unanimously, the Fourteenth Amendment, thereby inviting sterner treatment at the hands of Congress. To a majority of the legislators returning to Washington in December, it appeared that the proud spirit of rebellion had not yet been humbled, and that its worst abettor was the man in the White House.

Wentworth lost no time demonstrating that he was still a

staunch radical. On the second day of the session, he secured the passage of a resolution denouncing recent "acts of disloyalty" in the South, and reiterating the determination of Congress to admit no representatives from a former Confederate state until it had ratified the pending constitutional amendment. Ten days later he delivered a long, rambling speech in which censure of the president was interlarded with waggish humor that kept the House exploding with laughter. Like the doctor who wanted a medicine to change all diseases into fits, because he was "good on fits," Long John, too, claimed his speciality. He was an expert on "acting presidents," having served in Congress under all three—Tyler, Fillmore, and Johnson. They had, said he, all proved to be "traitors to the party that elected them," and the people were "sick of them." He made no secret of his desire to see Johnson impeached.⁴⁰

The second stage of congressional reconstruction was beginning, and Wentworth readily gave his assent to the act establishing military government in the South, and to the Tenure-of-Office Act, which deprived the President of control over his own cabinet. Yet he continued to be more concerned over financial problems. He was distressed by talk of further increase in the federal debt and further delay in the resumption of specie payments. He feared a new round of raids upon the treasury by "questionable" railroads and promoters of other extravagant schemes. "This country," he declared, "is in more danger to-day from extravagance and corruption than it ever was from rebellion."⁴¹

Above all, Long John hoped that Congress would enact a new general tariff law before it adjourned. The bill passed by the House during the previous session still pended in the Senate, but Commissioner Wells had, in the meantime, presented a plan for comprehensive tariff revision along moderately protective lines. The Senate took the Wells report as a basis for action, amended it drastically in the direction of higher duties, and substituted it for the House measure. Unlike most representatives from his section, Wentworth decided to support the Senate version because he considered it an improvement upon the wartime enactments. But there was enough opposition from Democrats and Western Republicans to prevent a final vote on the bill in the House. Tariff reform had been frustrated again.⁴²

The Thirty-ninth Congress adjourned on March 2, 1867,

but not before it had taken the unprecedented step of summoning its successor into immediate session. During the last exciting day of his term, Long John voted with the majority to override Johnson's vetoes of the Military Reconstruction and Tenure-of-Office bills. Then, leaving Southerners, tariffs, greenbacks, and other national problems to Norman Judd, he turned his face toward Chicago and the more serene life of a gentleman farmer.

CHAPTER XIII

The Man of Property

The wealth of Western men is greatly overestimated. . . . My property consists almost entirely in unproductive real estate. It only requires a fertile imagination to name the price per acre, &, as my number of acres is known, it is very easy to make me out a very wealthy man.—*John Wentworth to Asa D. Smith, January 28, 1865.*

FOR TWENTY YEARS of their disjointed marriage, Wentworth and his wife had lived apart, visiting each other at irregular intervals. When he retired from Congress in 1867, Long John gave serious thought to settling permanently in Troy, but a family argument drove him back to Chicago. Riley Loomis had died in the summer of 1866, leaving most of his estate, which approached a quarter of a million dollars, to his daughter Marie. Expecting to administer his wife's inheritance, Wentworth was surprised to learn that the responsibility had been given to Giles Kellogg, a Troy attorney whom he described as an "old fool." Both Marie and her mother, moreover, sided with Kellogg in the heated discussions that ensued. Long John, declaring that all Troy was not worth such humiliation, finally took an angry departure for Illinois, where his financial abilities were held in higher regard.¹

Marie died in 1870, leaving her fortune in trust for her daughter, Roxanna, and naming Wentworth as but one of three

executors of the estate. Roxanna continued to live in Troy with her grandmother until the latter's death two years later. After completing her finishing-school education, she eventually joined her father in Chicago. Meanwhile, in 1868, Long John's twenty-year-old nephew, Moses Wentworth, had come to Illinois with a Harvard degree and a desire to study law. Admitted to the bar in 1871, Moses thereafter devoted most of his energies to the management of his uncle's financial affairs. As the years passed Long John's affection for him grew to be that of a father for his son.²

Ever since the early 1850's Wentworth's farm at Summit had been "the jewel of all his possessions."³ Gross income seldom exceeded the total costs of operation, and yet the estate was no dilettante's show place. The farmhouse, built in about 1868, on what is now Harlem Avenue near Fifty-fifth Street, was large and comfortable, but designed for utility rather than display.⁴ The surrounding expanse of acres—given no fancier name than "John Wentworth's Farm"—became a model of efficiency and a center of experimentation in agricultural methods.

The farm was not Long John's home, but his retreat. For everyday living he preferred a hotel suite in the bustling city. But he loved to take a party of friends aboard the Chicago and Alton cars for the ten-mile trip to Summit, and a tour of inspection. There, in his private enclave of nearly seven square miles, where his despotic will was subject to no veto, he could shape one corner of the world completely to his own liking.

The size of the farm never satisfied Wentworth. His desire for more land was almost insatiable. In 1856 alone he bought almost six hundred acres, paying, on the average, about twenty dollars an acre. By the eve of the Civil War the farm had grown to 2,500 acres—one fifth of them improved. For the census of 1860, Long John estimated its cash value at \$50,000, and listed a total of 60 horses, 30 milk cows, 2 oxen, 275 other cattle, 300 sheep, and 100 swine.⁵

During the next nine years, the boundaries of the farm remained practically unchanged. Then, between 1869 and 1876, Wentworth acquired more than a thousand additional acres in the neighborhood of Summit, at a cost of no less than \$170,000. In the 1880's, the estate included approximately three thousand acres of contiguous land, and another thousand acres of scattered plots lying to the south and east. Long John may also have leased land in the adjacent "school section"—the 640 acres

set aside by the Federal government for the support of public education in the township. Finding the section still intact in the 1850's, he successfully opposed its sale as long as he lived.⁶

To the census taker in 1880, Wentworth declared that he had 2,400 acres of tilled land (including some lying fallow), and 2,100 acres of permanent meadows, pastures, orchards, and vineyards. He now valued the farm at \$460,000, or more than nine times its worth twenty years before. This meant that the value per acre had risen from \$20 in 1860 to over \$100 in 1880. Livestock listed for the latter year included 100 horses, 15 asses and mules, 75 milk cows, 125 other cattle, 150 sheep, and 200 swine.⁷

Big flocks of chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys, in numerous varieties, were a part of Long John's plan to have "something of everything." A visitor in 1861 noted forty colonies of bees and admired an orchard of one thousand apple and pear trees on the sandy ridge that cut the farm from east to west. In the fields grew oats, wheat, corn, and potatoes—even some tobacco for use in the battle against sheep ticks. Some products like wool, butter, and poultry were marketed regularly, but most of the food produced was consumed right on the farm by the livestock, the pack of dogs, and the score or more of farmhands, whom Wentworth employed on a year-around basis.⁸

A minor prophet of the great agricultural revolution, Long John was for many years the leading advocate and practitioner of livestock improvement in northern Illinois. His farm produced only incidentally for the market. Its main purpose was the breeding of thoroughbred stock for sale to other farmers. The Summit herds were therefore never large, the pastures never crowded. The emphasis was always upon quality, rather than quantity.⁹

Wentworth bought his blooded animals from Eastern importers, and knew their ancestry almost as well as he knew his own. The English Durham, or Shorthorn, most important of all pure breeds in the grading up of American beef cattle, inevitably became a specialty of the Summit farm. But Long John also tried to popularize the dual-purpose Devon, and among dairy cattle, he preferred the Alderney, declaring that it would be his choice if he could keep but a single cow.¹⁰

In stocking the farm with sheep, Wentworth at first chose both the French Merino, or Rambouillet, renowned for its fine wool, and the English Southdown, which produced excellent

mutton and a medium wool. He experimented with crossing these two diverse breeds for a time, but eventually he decided that the price premium on fine wool was insufficient, and gave his attention almost exclusively to the more versatile Southdowns.¹¹

As for hogs, Long John was perhaps the country's most enthusiastic champion of the Suffolk breed, a variation upon the Small Yorkshire. The authority Charles S. Plumb even credits him with the first importation of Suffolk swine into the United States, although it is more likely that he started his herd with purchases from Eastern breeders. Suffolks were small in size, but inexpensively kept. Wentworth maintained in 1859 that by pasturing them for five months of the year, and feeding them corn during the other seven, he could produce pork of the "very best quality" for two cents a pound. His eloquent praise convinced some farmers in the region, but the breed never became generally popular and remained almost unknown outside the Mississippi Valley.¹²

In the columns of the *Prairie Farmer* over a forty-year period, one finds frequent mention of Wentworth's livestock sales to purchasers near and far. In October, 1875, for example, the paper reported that he had recently sold ten Suffolk boars and five sows, seven Southdown bucks and nine ewes, together with a Shorthorn bull, to a total of fourteen farmers scattered through Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Similarly, in February and March, 1877, the journal announced the sale of eight bulls and four cows to buyers in six different states.¹³

During his first decade as a stock breeder, Wentworth's cattle, sheep, and hogs won many premiums at the annual state fairs. Once his reputation was firmly established, he showed less interest in grooming animals for exhibition, but he never ceased to encourage all efforts at closer co-operation among farmers, both for the exchange of information and for political purposes. At the time of his return to Congress in 1865, he was vice-president of the Illinois State Agricultural Society, and a member of its executive committee. When the Cook County Farmers' Association was organized in 1874, he became its first president.¹⁴

Long John counted himself among the "book farmers" who believed in progress through education. As early as 1843 he had written an article for the *Prairie Farmer* presenting the

case for scientific agriculture, and in Congress he had proposed the establishment of a national agricultural school. He read the leading farm journals and corresponded with their editors. He experimented frequently with new techniques and implements. He let pass no opportunity to compare notes with other breeders. Among his many letters to newspapers on agricultural subjects, one finds such items as: a description of his struggles with the dreaded blackleg and hog cholera; a testimonial to cornstalks as a substitute for hay; and a defense of the practice of "terbackerin' " sheep.¹⁵

Wentworth was proud of his finesse in meeting the problem of canine depredations. "Whenever a sheep of mine is killed in the pasture," he explained, "I consider for the sake of peace that it is wolves that have done it."

I leave my dead sheep where I found it and place a lot of strychnine in it in order to catch the wolves when they return. By some accident I find a large number of my neighbors' dogs lying dead upon the premises. My neighbors lose their dogs and regret that their good honest dogs should be eating poisoned mutton that I had placed in my pasture for wolves. This treatment has made a wonderful reform in dogs in my neighborhood.¹⁶

A more difficult problem confronting Wentworth and certain other landowners in the Summit region was drainage. North of the canal lay Mud Lake, a low area that was inundated for much of the year by rains, spring thaws, and periodic rampages of the Des Plaines River. Efforts by dredging and ditching to direct the stagnant waters of Mud Lake into the listless Chicago River were largely unsuccessful until after 1871. In that year the deepening of the Illinois and Michigan Canal was completed, and the city of Chicago achieved its goal of reversing the Chicago River so that the sewage-polluted stream would empty, via the canal, into the Illinois River, rather than into Lake Michigan.

With a stronger current now flowing in the Chicago River, drainage of Mud Lake became easier. William B. Ogden, who owned large amounts of land in the area, dredged a channel from the Des Plaines River near Summit to the West Fork of the South Branch some five miles away. The project had Wentworth's approval, if not his active assistance. It bordered his land for at least a half mile and was popularly known as the

"Ogden-Wentworth Ditch." Spring floods in 1872 enlarged the ditch, and thereafter a steady stream of water moved eastward from Summit, diverting a good part of the Des Plaines from its natural bed into the Chicago River. The Illinois and Michigan Canal proved unequal to this added burden, and the new southward flow of the Chicago was partially counteracted, its waters becoming as foul as they had ever been. Other factors, including a steady fall in the level of Lake Michigan, contributed to the failure of the ill-conceived plan for flushing Chicago sewage into the Gulf of Mexico, but the Ogden-Wentworth Ditch received most of the blame.¹⁷

City officials, realizing too late their error in permitting the ditch to be dug, secured Ogden's consent in 1874 to the construction of a dam at its western end. By 1877, a temporary barrier of pilings and earth had been completed, shutting out the waters of the Des Plaines, except in periods of flood. But the controversy only became more heated and complicated as a result. The erection of the dam caused the Des Plaines to overflow its banks south of Summit. For landowners in the area, this was disastrous in the spring, but advantageous in the winter, when the ice fields provided them with an extra source of income. It therefore became the custom for raiding parties to knock the dam apart in the spring and rebuild it in the fall. Large amounts of water consequently continued to flow from the Des Plaines through the ditch into the Chicago River.¹⁸

Among the many critics of the Ogden-Wentworth Ditch, the most relentless was the Citizens' Association of Chicago. It repeatedly demanded "the closing of this abominable subversion of nature," and predicted a total diversion of the Des Plaines if remedial measures were not soon adopted.¹⁹ In the extensive public debates upon the issue, Wentworth, who was less tactful than Ogden and survived him by eleven years, bore the brunt of civic reproach.

Long John's attitude hardened into angry defiance after a summer night in 1873, when a mob of "several hundred men" invaded his farm and attempted to fill in a section of the ditch. "I bought a certain tract of land of the Canal Trustees," said he, "and I propose to keep possession under all circumstances, and to dig ditches and plant wherever I please, and to protect myself and my employes in so digging and planting against outlaws. . . . We shall surrender to law, but not to violence."²⁰

Wentworth argued that with the purchase of his Mud Lake

land he had acquired a vested right to water outlets in both directions, and that the deepening of the canal could have no effect upon such a right. He was opposed to the temporary dam built in the 1870's, and to the permanent one which finally replaced it in 1885. When the waters of the Des Plaines began to cut new channels around the barrier, he stubbornly refused permission to extend it southward across his own property.

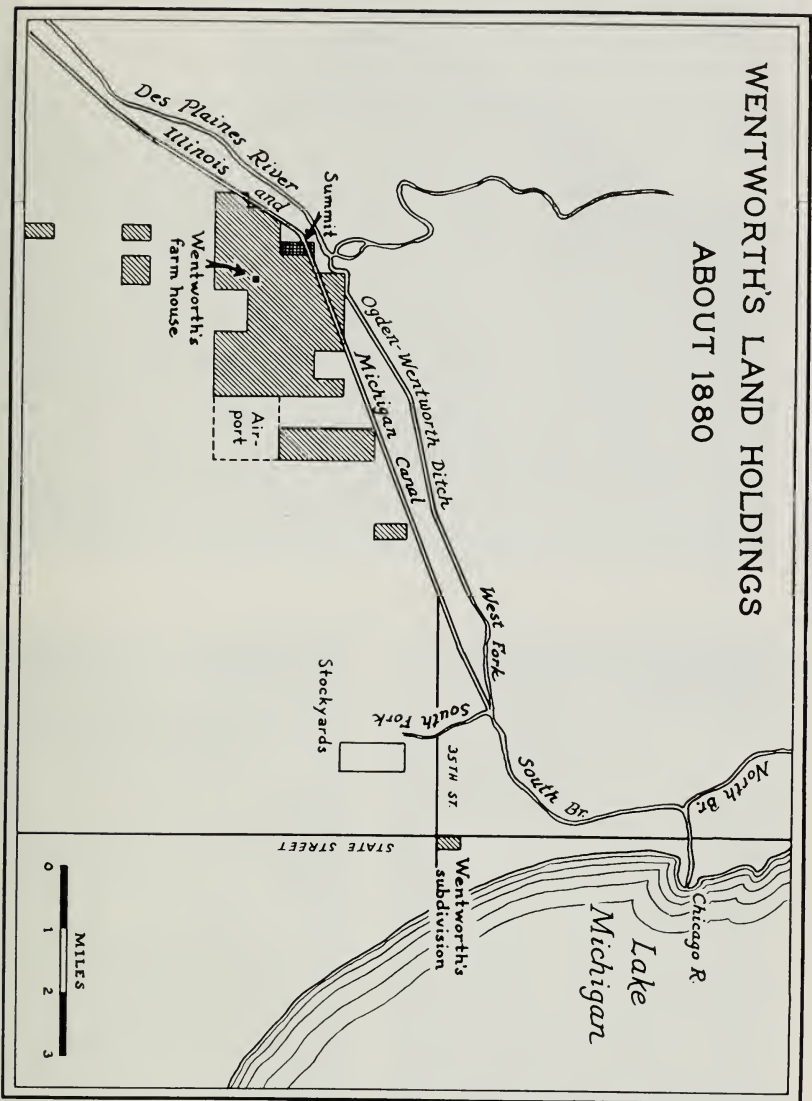
To the charge that the Ogden-Wentworth Ditch had thwarted efforts to cleanse the Chicago River, Long John replied that the volume of water flowing annually from Mud Lake into the river, although concentrated now in a single stream, was actually no greater than in earlier years. The facts plainly belied this contention, but he was on sounder ground when he maintained that the ditch had been used as a "scape-goat" to divert public attention from serious miscalculations in the plan for reversing the Chicago River.²¹

And so the futile controversy continued. Not until the completion, twelve years after Wentworth's death, of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, was the city's sewage problem finally solved.

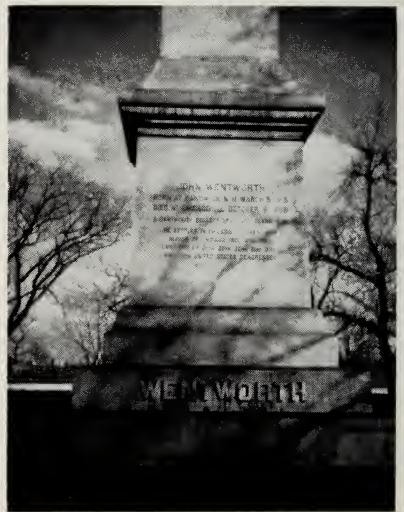
The Summit farm, its value mounting year by year with the steady inflation of land prices, came to represent at least half of Long John's entire wealth. But for income he depended upon other investments. Among these, the most important were his acreages south of the city. Lying directly across the path of urban expansion, they had become extremely valuable by the close of the Civil War. In 1865, for example, the newly formed Union Stock Yard and Transit Company bought 320 acres of its present site from Wentworth. Even though the land was looked upon at the time as "an almost valueless marsh," the price was \$100,000.²²

The next year Long John received a similar amount for fifty acres located north of Thirty-first Street, between Wentworth Avenue and State Street. This plot was a part of the land which he had acquired for fifteen dollars an acre in 1845 from the Wisconsin Marine and Fire Insurance Company. For the remaining sixty acres of that purchase (bounded by Thirty-second and Thirty-fifth streets, State Street and Indiana Avenue), he had different plans. By 1867, with the necessary improvements completed, it had become "John Wentworth's Subdivision," marked off into nine city blocks and over four hundred lots.²³

WENTWORTH'S LAND HOLDINGS ABOUT 1880



Wentworth's principal land holdings about 1880, showing also the 320 acres which he sold to the Union Stock Yard and Transit Company in 1865. As an aid to the reader, the location of today's Chicago Midway Airport is also indicated. Drawn by Patricia Theimer from data supplied by the author.



Twentieth century relics of Wentworth. At the top, Wentworth's farm house. At the bottom, Wentworth's monument in Rosehill cemetery.

The subdivision proved to be the most fortunate of all Wentworth's ventures. Averaging less than twenty-five feet in width, and varying in length from 143.7 to 181.5 feet, the lots began to sell in 1867 for \$800 and \$900 apiece. Even at these prices, the sixty acres represented a potential gross value of approximately \$400,000, and with each passing year the unsold lots became more valuable. The central block of the nine was held completely off the market until the southward extension of Michigan Boulevard had greatly enhanced its worth. Then Long John began to sell lots at fabulous prices to millionaires like Charles P. Libby and Conrad Seipp. In the late 1880's, the Michigan Boulevard front of this square was said to contain "the finest block of private residences in Chicago." By that time Wentworth retained only twelve lots in the subdivision, all of them in the central block.²⁴

The major part of Wentworth's capital was always invested in land. To the census taker in 1860, he reported owning \$300,000 in real and \$30,000 in personal property.²⁵ As his fortune grew, this ratio remained essentially unchanged. Much of his personal wealth in 1860 consisted of shares in the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad, but a revolution in the management of that road during the Civil War caused him to transfer his interest elsewhere.

When Galena stockholders assembled for their annual meeting on June 1, 1864, the destinies of the company were still in the hands of the group that had overthrown John B. Turner in 1859. Wentworth was completing his fifth year as a director, and although Walter Newberry had resigned the presidency, his place had been taken by a close associate, William H. Brown. But the organizers of the new Chicago and North Western wanted the Galena for the cornerstone of a great new railroad system, and their leader, William B. Ogden, arrived at the meeting with enough proxies to capture control. Wentworth and most of the old board members were summarily replaced by Ogden's coadjutors. Turner became president once more. And on the following day the stockholders voted to consolidate with the North Western. The history of the Galena as an independent road thus came to an abrupt end.²⁶

In some quarters the transaction was denounced as a predatory raid by an impecunious railroad upon the assets of a prosperous one. A group of Galena stockholders promptly took steps to have the agreement set aside by the United States

Circuit Court. Elliott Anthony, Wentworth's friend and the Galena attorney since 1859, prepared an able argument for the plaintiffs, but the case was never carried to a final decision. Long John, who had enjoyed his years upon the board of directors, bitterly resented the absorption of the Galena by the North Western. In 1876 he was still condemning the consolidation—and one of its leading architects, Samuel J. Tilden.²⁷

Before the end of his life, Wentworth had become one of those envied sons of fate, an American millionaire. Gradually accumulated by prudent investment, and carefully conserved by a frugality that bordered on miserliness, his fortune was actually a modest one when compared with those of numerous contemporaries, but popular gossip made him one of the richest men in Chicago. He was, said the *Tribune* in 1862, worth \$750,000 in "clear cash," including a hoard of \$200,000 in gold which he kept for emergency use. The rumors became increasingly fantastic with repetition. By 1864 the *Times* was estimating his store of gold at \$700,000—far more than the true value of all his real and personal property at that time.²⁸

Like all men of substance, Wentworth found himself constantly pressed for donations to various institutions and causes. His resistance, however, was usually equal to the most importunate solicitations. In 1857, to be sure, he did contribute his mayoral salary to charity, but such benefactions were less than frequent. The doctrine of stewardship played no part in Long John's social philosophy. He had acquired his money honestly, and he intended to keep it.

Yet Wentworth was never reluctant about paying a fair price for something that he really coveted, such as a certain plot of land, a prize heifer, or an honorary degree. The administration of Dartmouth College, confronted with a financial crisis during the Civil War, made little headway in its appeals to him until the possibility of an LL.D. was mentioned. Then he became more interested. Indeed, the thought of attaching those respected letters to his name was so pleasing that he eventually presented his alma mater with \$10,000. The gift, burdened with no restrictions as to its use, was given in 1867, and Long John received his degree the same year. College officials preferred, of course, to look upon these two simultaneous events as unrelated, but Wentworth's view of the transaction is revealed in a letter on the subject from Professor Elihu T. Quimby to President Asa D. Smith. It was written in July of 1867: "I have an

answer from Chicago. The \$10,000 is ready. He says he will advance it as soon as he gets the parchment which he desires sent by mail. I presume he thinks it is customary to give diplomas for the Honorary degrees. I shall write him that it is not customary but that he can have one . . . if he desires.”²⁹

Not all the sons of Dartmouth were happy at the honor bestowed upon Wentworth. Professor Samuel C. Bartlett of the Chicago Theological Seminary, a member of Long John’s graduating class and a future president of Dartmouth, protested vigorously against the indiscriminate granting of honorary degrees. He then added:

There is one recent case, which has been received with such general derision that I will allude to it. A person without any literary taste or standing whatever, who has been, indeed, much in public life, as a politician commanding no respect, was at length dropped by his party for the one reason—to my positive knowledge—that even the party could not bear the burden of his character any longer; and after being so dropped, he was picked up by the college for its highest honorary degree. “It is a disgrace to them,” was the spontaneous expression which I heard again and again where he is best known. And when it was soon after announced that he had made a donation to the college, I was told by an intelligent loyal gentleman (a graduate of the college) that from his knowledge of the circumstances, there could be no question it was a bargain and sale, *previously agreed upon*—a College Doctorate for so many thousand dollars.³⁰

Wentworth had nevertheless aided the college in a critical hour, and Dartmouth continued to show her gratitude. He was a speaker at the great centennial celebration of 1869, and in the 1880’s, he became president of the national alumni organization.³¹

The years following his retirement from Congress in 1867 were filled with a variety of activities, but at no time did Long John lose all interest in politics. His huge frame was still a familiar sight at mass meetings; his lusty voice could still be heard in the tumult of each political campaign. Although party leaders had cast him aside, he remained popular with the masses, for whom his rambling speeches, alternating between extremes of buffoonery and austere piety, were an unfailing source of entertainment. “Long John always draws,” said the

Chicago *Times*. "The bare announcement that he will speak is sufficient to overcrowd the largest hall in Chicago."³²

Local Chicago politics presented a confused picture by the late 1860's. The Republicans were in power, but badly divided. Reform elements in the party charged that the administration of Mayor John B. Rice had become a front for spoilsmen like Anton Hesing, proprietor of the *Staats-Zeitung* and boss of the Germans. In the municipal election of 1869, these dissentients joined with Democrats to form a "Citizens' Ticket," opposing the nominees of the regular Republicans, or "Barnacles." For a time both sides hoped to have Wentworth's help, but the fact that Judd and Scammon were supporting the regular ticket was enough in itself to make a reformer of Long John. Wandering into a mass meeting on the evening of September 25 (city elections had been moved to the autumn), he was called to the platform and responded with a speech endorsing Roswell B. Mason, the Citizens' candidate for mayor. Disappointed "Barnacles" in the audience tried to shout him down, and, failing in that formidable task, persuaded the janitor to turn off the gaslights. The meeting then adjourned to the open air, where Wentworth finished his remarks, searing the Hesing ring "as if with lunar caustic." The election ended in a victory for the reform ticket, but the triumph of virtue was temporary. Corruption in the city council and administrative departments soon appeared to be worse than ever.³³

In 1870, Wentworth became a central figure in the endless battle for control of the Republican party. Judd had decided to vacate his seat in Congress, and Joseph Medill hoped to succeed him. But Medill's participation in the recent Citizens' movement had offended the regular Republican organization, which preferred to support Charles B. Farwell, a wealthy dry-goods merchant. Farwell's nomination by the district convention late in October was the signal for another uprising within the party. The Medill faction approached Long John with the plea that he enter the congressional race as an independent, and at a public meeting in Metropolitan Hall on October 29, he gave his consent.³⁴

Thomas Hoyne, the Democratic candidate, promptly withdrew from the contest and urged his followers to vote for Wentworth. Long John consequently found himself in the strange position of being supported by both the *Tribune* and the *Times*, two newspapers which, in the past, had seldom

agreed on anything, except that John Wentworth was the blackest villain in Chicago. But now the *Tribune* reminded its readers that his faults had never included financial dishonesty, and the *Times* pictured him as another Cincinnatus, returning from his farm "to participate again in public affairs."

In his retirement, he has not, apparently, grown any older. His colossal form towers upward with the same physical vigor as of old. His voice is as clear, his sentences as trenchant, his ideas as incisive and original as when Chicago first listened with curiosity, mixed with wonder, to this most vigorous and peculiar of all her public men.³⁵

Wentworth conducted a spirited campaign in the brief period remaining before election day, but the regulars were too well organized, and "Poker Charlie" Farwell was extremely popular with the "boys." For the first and only time in his career, Long John suffered defeat at the polls, receiving only 15,025 votes, to Farwell's 20,342. A seventh term in Congress had escaped him, and he did not pursue it further.³⁶

The dissension among Chicago Republicans which had led to the Citizens' ticket of 1869, and to Wentworth's candidacy in 1870, typified a growing unrest in the party throughout the entire country. Out of disillusionment with radical reconstruction, out of the frustrated desires for tariff and civil service reform, out of dismay at the program and character of the Grant administration, emerged that strange compound of lofty purposes and selfish personal ambitions known as Liberal Republicanism. Missouri was the birthplace and Carl Schurz, the founder of the movement—if it had either—but there were actually many beginnings, all culminating in the decision to hold a national convention at Cincinnati on May 1, 1872.

In Illinois, the opposition to Grant was strong but sharply divided. No fewer than three men from the state aspired to the presidential nomination at Cincinnati: Senator Lyman Trumbull, the Chicago *Tribune's* favorite, who had broken with the administration over its reconstruction policies; Supreme Court Justice David Davis, popular with the Democrats, and nominee of the Reform Labor Party; and Governor John M. Palmer, who had been angered by the high-handed intervention of federal troops in the aftermath of the Chicago Fire. Palmer's name was eventually withdrawn, but this only intensified the rivalry between Davis and Trumbull. Beyond the borders of Illinois, meanwhile, Horace Greeley and Charles Francis

Adams were becoming formidable contenders for the privilege of running against the Hero of Appomattox.

Wentworth, who disliked Trumbull as much as he admired Davis, was one of the latter's most ardent sponsors, along with Leonard Swett and Jesse W. Fell. Visiting in the East from February to April, and conferring with many of the leading insurgents, he concluded that the only barrier to a Davis victory was the disunity in Illinois. "Davis could be nominated unanimously but for Trumbull & his friends," he declared.³⁷

Long John insisted that the Trumbull forces had no real hope of winning. Their scheme, instead, was to sell themselves to the Adams men for the promise of the vice-presidential nomination. "We are to be swamped in Illinois by numbers," he warned. "Hundreds opposed to us in Illinois are to come to Cincinnati. Those there are to select the men who are to cast the vote of the State. . . . The battle is to be fought in Illinois."³⁸

The Liberal movement was without formal organization in most states. Any man who wished might attend the meeting at Cincinnati, where the convention would determine the apportionment of votes and state caucuses would select their official delegations. The struggle in Illinois therefore developed into a contest to recruit volunteers for the trip to Cincinnati. "Give us numbers," Wentworth pleaded in letters to Davis. "The magic word is *numbers*."³⁹

Justice Davis and his friends hastened to comply. A horde of more than five hundred Illinoisans descended upon Cincinnati, and Long John, who had been one of the earliest arrivals, was delighted to find that a great majority of them were devoted Davis men. Critics of the Justice charged that he had spent many thousands of dollars from his ample fortune to finance the impressive migration.⁴⁰

But it soon became clear that the Davis boom had more noise than strength. Reform elements in the convention regarded the Illinois judge with deep distrust. He was, they said, an uninvited interloper, a Democrat in disguise, the candidate of self-seeking politicians. A group of influential editors (including Horace White of the *Chicago Tribune* and Samuel Bowles of the Springfield [Mass.] *Republican*) held a conference and agreed to "kill off D. Davis" with simultaneous dispatches to their various newspapers. Even before the opening session, Wentworth and his associates must have realized that

their cause was hopeless, but they were determined to hold on, if for no other reason than to frustrate the Adams-Trumbull coalition.⁴¹

On April 30, after two days of wrangling, the Illinois contingent finally decided to divide the state's vote, and Davis was allotted one half of the total. Wentworth strongly disapproved of the arrangement, looking upon it as an unnecessary surrender. "I never would have consented to a division of our delegation," he complained, "except upon the principle of giving up my pocket book to save my life . . . and it has done no good."⁴²

When the first ballot was completed on May 3, Davis had received only 92½ votes, and his strength dwindled steadily thereafter. Trumbull was likewise never a dangerous threat, although his total mounted to 156 votes on the third ballot before starting to decline. With each succeeding roll call, it became more apparent that the contest lay between Adams and Greeley. Yet the Illinois delegation, whose united vote for either of the two leaders might have been decisive, stubbornly continued to give 21 votes to Davis and 21 to Trumbull.

As the sixth ballot began, Adams held the lead, but he desperately needed help from the group that was still clinging to Trumbull. The Illinois delegation retired for consultation, and Gustave Koerner, one of Trumbull's managers, urged that the state throw its entire strength to Adams. A Greeley victory, he predicted, would demoralize the Liberal movement. But Wentworth, Swett, and many other Davis men emphatically preferred Greeley to Adams, whose nomination would undoubtedly mean the selection of Trumbull as the vice-presidential candidate. The delegation consequently returned to the convention hall with its differences unresolved. The vote of Illinois was announced as: 27 for Adams, 14 for Greeley, and 1 for Trumbull.⁴³

By that time, however, a stampede to Greeley had begun, and the eccentric New Yorker, whose candidacy had been treated in many circles as a joke, swept triumphantly past Adams to win the nomination. Reformers like Schurz were horrified, and the cabal of independent editors recovered only slowly from its state of shock. In apportioning the blame for their defeat, the Adams men did not neglect Wentworth. "That which is unpleasant to us in the nomination of Mr. Greeley," said the Cincinnati *Commercial* in its post-convention lament,

"is that it should seem to have been brought about by Frank P. Blair, John Wentworth, [Reuben E.] Fenton and other managing politicians." ⁴⁴

As Greeley launched a surprisingly able, but nonetheless futile, campaign against Grant, Long John returned to the tranquillity of his Summit farm. A year later, he was still assuring all who would listen that Davis had been deprived of certain victory at Cincinnati by the malicious opposition of the Trumbull faction. ⁴⁵

Wentworth's participation in politics after 1872 was intermittent and erratic. Little remained of his old appetite for public office. He declined an opportunity to run for state senator in 1874, and although nominated for alderman two years later, he retired from the contest before election day. On one occasion, it is said, a group of citizens visited the farm to suggest that he become a candidate for mayor. Long John, whom they found sitting contentedly in the shade of an apple tree, gave them a terse reply: "Gentlemen, I'm happy here: take an apple." ⁴⁶

The Liberal Republican movement disintegrated more rapidly than it had formed, but the spirit of insurgency endured. In 1874, Wentworth supported the Democratic candidate for Congress against Farwell, and in 1876, he joined another uprising of local reformers against the Hising machine, which had returned to power in Chicago. His hostility toward the Grant regime grew steadily more intense with periodic exposures of additional scandals in the federal government. As a remedy, he proposed the formation of a revolutionary new party which would embrace all enemies of corruption, all opponents of the Grant administration. Davis, he insisted, would be its logical leader. ⁴⁷

The nomination of Hayes and Tilden in 1876 placed Wentworth in a quandary. A Democratic victory might cleanse American politics, but Long John could not forget the rape of the Galena Railroad twelve years before. After weeks of making up his mind, he decided to share his opinions with the multitude. He engaged McCormick's Hall for the evening of September 22, hired a company of musicians, and issued a general invitation to the public. Some three thousand persons assembled at the appointed time, and Long John, after introducing himself as the featured speaker, plunged into a savage

attack upon Tilden, whom he called the "brain power" of railroad monopoly. It was the duty of every honest man, said he, to support Rutherford B. Hayes—"a patriot, soldier, and statesman, a sincere reformer . . . and an outspoken opponent of the Congressional rings." With these words of lavish praise for the Republican nominee, he returned, once and for all, to the comfortable fold of party orthodoxy.⁴⁸

It was fitting that Wentworth's final appearance in the arena of national politics should set off one more explosive controversy within the ranks of his own party. Long John was sixty-five years old in 1880, and he had grown increasingly fat, wealthy, and conservative. His interest in reform had faded; his bitterest complaint was against high taxation. Whether from fright at recent conflicts between capital and labor, or from some late-hour stirring of personal ambition, he abruptly reversed himself and joined the Logans and the Conklings in their attempt to win a third term in the White House for Ulysses S. Grant.

Nowhere did the Grant movement provoke a more furious struggle than in Cook County. Supporters of the former President were probably a minority in Chicago, but they included many distinguished names, among them Robert Todd Lincoln and young Stephen A. Douglas. The Union League Club, founded in 1879, served as an imposing front for third-term agitation. Wentworth, according to the club historian, had given "the first decided impetus" toward its organization, and was the "dominating personality" of its early years.⁴⁹

The Republican primaries held in Cook County on May 8, 1880, were riotous contests. The prize at stake was control of the county convention, which would send ninety-two delegates to the state meeting at Springfield. Wentworth was defeated as a candidate in the first ward, and the Grant forces managed to carry only three out of seven senatorial districts. According to the established practice, these results should have entitled them to choose thirty-six of the delegates going to Springfield. But when the county convention met in Farwell Hall on May 10, the anti-Grant majority had already decided to impose the unit rule and appoint a slate of delegates drawn entirely from opponents of the third term. The Grant men, upon discovering the plot, promptly withdrew from the hall and organized a second meeting in the Palmer House. At Wentworth's urging,

they drew up their own list of ninety-two delegates to the state convention.⁵⁰

In Springfield, after much debate, the issue was settled with the seating of fifty-six "Farwell Hall" and thirty-six "Palmer House" delegates from Cook County. This was enough to give the Grant men control of the convention, and they exploited their advantage relentlessly. Ignoring the custom of deferring to preferences expressed by district caucuses, they voted to send a solid Grant delegation to the national convention. Heading the slate of forty-two names, as representatives of the first congressional district, were John Wentworth and Stephen A. Douglas. The anti-Grant forces, thrown into convulsions by this draught from their own cup of poison, prepared to contest the appointment.⁵¹

The scene of battle now shifted back to Chicago, where the Republican National Convention opened its sessions on June 2. Long John took his seat with the Illinois delegation, knowing that his right to do so was under challenge. On the second day he was elected a vice-president of the convention—an empty honor conferred upon one member from each state and territory. Not until June 4 was the credentials committee ready with its report on contested seats. In the Illinois case, which had attracted the widest attention, a majority of the committee recommended the unseating of eighteen delegates, including Wentworth and Douglas.

After argument from both sides, the Grant managers secured a division of the report so that a vote might be taken upon that portion applying to the first district of Illinois. Their obvious purpose was to reduce to a minimum the number of Grant delegates who must abstain from voting on the question. And so it was that a roll-call vote upon the right of "Long John Wentworth and Short Stevey Douglas" to retain their places in the Illinois delegation became an early test of Grant's strength in the convention.

First the delegates voted upon a motion to accept the minority report, which favored the sitting members. It was defeated, 387 to 353. Then they considered the majority report and gave it their approval, 384 to 356. Wentworth and Douglas, no longer members of the convention, were requested to surrender their seats. They had no choice but to do so. For the supporters of General Grant, the expulsion of the two men

was one of the first in a long series of setbacks which would culminate in the nomination of James A. Garfield several days later. For Long John, it was the last moment of drama in a long and stormy political career. Joining hands with the son of the "Little Giant," the old man shuffled with ponderous steps and a mournful countenance out of the convention hall.⁵²

CHAPTER XIV

The Old-Timer

To the last he was the same self-reliant, self-assertive, colossal embodiment of defiant, intellectual egotism, unrelieved by sweetness or light . . . a tough New Hampshire boulder, too flinty and rugged to admit of polish, too hard and tenacious to assimilate or blend with the human material about him.—
CHICAGO TRIBUNE, *October 17, 1888.*

FROM HIS ROOMS at the Sherman House in the 1880's, Long John looked out upon a lusty metropolis that vibrated to the restless energies of over half a million people. It was a new city, built of stone and steel upon the ashes of the one obliterated in 1871. Landmarks that had survived the fire were few, and fewer still were vestiges of the grubby little community chartered in 1837. Not her buildings, but her old men, were Chicago's principal relics of the past.

Of all the local patriarchs, Wentworth was the easiest to recognize and the most notorious. Newcomers given a glimpse of him in his natural habitat sometimes found the sight more impressive than the floor of silver dollars in the Palmer House barbershop. Hunched like a fierce old bear over his table in the hotel dining-room, or shambling along the crowded streets toward Jackson Hall, he was often the target of a pointed finger, the subject of a whispered colloquy. Then, once again, the story would be told of his association with Douglas and

Lincoln, or of the celebrated reply to Vallandigham, or the raid upon the "Sands." Well before his death, the mists of legend had begun to wrap themselves about his massive figure.

Newspaper reporters, finding him an inexhaustible source of copy, recorded with gentle derision the old man's strange mannerisms and crotchety opinions. When his tongue had been loosened by a skillful questioner, Long John frequently "talked the stuffing out of" several hours—chewing all the while on a plug of tobacco, and twisting his features into a series of grimaces, "each more shocking than its predecessor." Sometimes a hearty bellow of laughter or snort of annoyance would shake loose his upper teeth, and then he would look for all the world like "the giant who smelt the blood of an Englishman."¹

There were certain words whose very pronunciation could be depended upon to provoke a lengthy speech. "Taxation" was one of them. "The most fun I have," Long John admitted, "is sittin' round . . . an' cussin' about the taxes. . . . Do you know, sir, I pay \$20,000 a year in special assessments, over 'n' above regular taxes? I do, and I tell you I haven't got that much comin' in. My income isn't enough to pay my taxes." So piteous was the tone of these complaints that his listeners at times drew back in alarm, fearing that the impoverished millionaire was about to ask for a loan.²

The sight or mention of sweet peas also set him to grumbling. At Summit, he confessed, the "sassy things" were a failure. In spite of all his efforts, they simply refused to bloom, and he was ready to give up the struggle. But he liked flowers generally because they reminded him of the ladies. And he greatly admired the ladies—except for those "restless, discontented cranks" who wanted the right to vote. "They aren't any good on earth," was Long John's verdict on the suffragists. "I wouldn't give a rap for the lot of them."

If women must stir up a fuss of some kind, let them work for saloon reform. No, not prohibition. "I wouldn't waste my time talking about such a move," said he.

If a man wants a drink he'll have it if he's anything like me. It isn't the drinks that hurt people so much as it is the surroundings. It's the saloon influence that makes loafers of our boys and sots of the men. . . . We must drive the boys away from the low-cut actresses' photographs; from the oil paintings and the lithographs. We must drive the men away from their glasses and chairs. The sawdust must go and the sausage must

go; so must the Sunday pretzel, cheese, pickled beets, dried herrings, rye bread, and red-hots. We had hard work to break slavery and we will have hard work to break the saloon element, but it can be done and is bound to come. I'm enlisted.³

On the subject of his own personal habits, the venerable sage could be equally loquacious. "I never was one of your bell-livers," he declared. "I never did and never will live on time. Got no use for call-bells, dinner-bells, or alarm clocks. . . . My doctrine is this, eat when you're hungry, drink when you're thirsty, sleep when you're sleepy, and get up when you're ready." And only in a hotel, he pointed out, could a man have such freedom.

At dinner, whenever he decided to eat it, Long John liked to have soup, fish, a roast, plenty of vegetables, and bread pudding, perhaps, for dessert. From whiskey, and then champagne, he had been reduced by the orders of his doctor to Rhenish wine as his daily beverage. No, he never drank beer. "It's nasty stuff," he warned, "makes you soggy and fat and lazy, and I don't want to be either."⁴

Asked about bathing, Wentworth replied that he washed himself whenever it seemed necessary, but that he did not believe in "soaking and steaming his life out on a marble slab," no matter how fashionable that ordeal might have become. As for Godliness, he attended church twice every Sunday and was "a regular evangelical" in his theology. "I believe," he told one reporter, "in a hell, straight-out, and in future punishment. And I believe in rewards straight-out."⁵

The stream of visitors invading his privacy at the Sherman House grew bigger each year, until he was finally compelled to post the following notice upon his door:

JOHN WENTWORTH'S OFFICE

Is at Room 6, Number 45 LaSalle Street—Jackson Hall—where he will be pleased to meet all persons having business with him, and his friends generally. In his absence, write him, or call at Room 8, upon the same floor and in the same building, where Moses J. Wentworth will give all necessary information. As he goes to the Hotel only to eat and sleep, he wishes no callers there. His private residence is at Summit.

But even at Summit the traffic was heavy. "So many people visit my farm in the course of a year that it is very difficult to remember them," he confided to a friend in 1882.⁶

Long John's circle of acquaintances had been greatly expanded as a result of his genealogical investigations, which drew him into extensive correspondence with persons all over the country. He had begun during his school days to collect information about the Wentworth family in America, and the interest had gradually become a passion. For years he scanned newspaper files, searched local public records, tramped through cemeteries, and catechized distant relatives, in an endless pursuit of births and marriages and deaths. By the 1860's, having accumulated an impressive mass of materials, he was writing articles for the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*. In 1871, at a rumored cost of thirty thousand dollars, he published privately a two-volume *Wentworth Genealogy*, and distributed free sets to members of the family all over the world.⁷

"My first edition," he later asserted, "was sent out to show what I *did not* know; then there came in to me a vast amount of very useful information." A sizable staff labored for another seven years before the corrected and enlarged version of *The Wentworth Genealogy* was ready. Published by Little, Brown and Company in 1878, it amounted to three imposing volumes. Long John made no effort to conceal his scholarly pride, and callers frequently found him turning the pages with an admiring eye. Joseph Forrest once disdainfully suggested that it was the only book he ever read after graduating from Dartmouth.⁸

With equal enthusiasm, Wentworth plunged into research on the history of Chicago, and soon won public acceptance as an authority on the subject. But his progress in the collection of materials was devastatingly interrupted by the Great Fire of 1871, which consumed Jackson Hall and its priceless contents, including complete files of the *Democrat* and all of Long John's personal papers. As soon as possible he took vigorous steps to repair some of the damage, constructing a new building, with fireproof vaults, and then combing the countryside for issues of the *Democrat*. "The understanding is," he promised, "that my files shall ever be open to the public, and that they shall be deposited in some more public place than the new Jackson Hall, 45 LaSalle street, the moment any of our public buildings shall be completed with proper fire-proof apartments." Laboriously, over a period of years, he assembled a

fairly comprehensive file, which is now the property of the Chicago Historical Society.⁹

"I am expending more time & money in developing Chicago History than any other twenty men," Wentworth boasted in 1879. Not satisfied with piling up a miscellany of periodicals, pamphlets, scrapbooks, and manuscripts, he wanted reference aids which would bring the information to his fingertips. His most ambitious effort in this direction was to hire the indexing of certain early Chicago newspapers, a project which lasted many years and filled numerous volumes.¹⁰

In 1876, and again in 1881, Wentworth delivered public addresses on "Early Chicago," both of which were printed in *Fergus' Historical Series*. More valuable to later historians were his *Congressional Reminiscences*, also prepared first as a lecture, and then published in 1882. At heart, however, Long John remained a genealogist and antiquarian, interested primarily in names and the vital data connected with them. He was, for example, overjoyed to learn that the widow of John Calhoun, first editor of the *Democrat*, had preserved her husband's old account books—not because of any light that they might throw upon the beginnings of Chicago journalism, but because they would supply him with the "names of the journeymen printers whom Mr. Calhoun employed." He devoted much time to compiling lists of pioneer Chicagoans, and his favorite festivity was the Calumet Club's annual reception for "Old Settlers."¹¹

Despite his interest in local history, Wentworth was not one of the early sponsors of the Chicago Historical Society, but by the 1880's he had become its vice-president and chief troublemaker. Meetings of the society during those years were seldom dull, for Long John used them to renew his feuds with several old enemies on the roster of members. President Isaac N. Arnold was sometimes the target of his animosity; so, on occasion, were William Bross and Elihu B. Washburne. But the quarry that he stalked most relentlessly was J. Young Scammon.

Scammon's banking enterprise and great personal fortune had been swept away by fire and financial panic in the 1870's. Some funds of the Chicago Historical Society had been on deposit in the Scammon bank at the time of its collapse, and only a partial restitution had been made. After studying the tangled details, Wentworth presented a report accusing Scam-

mon of defalcation, and fixing his debt to the society at almost thirty thousand dollars. Scammon replied that, if anything, the society owed *him* money for loans which he had advanced at various times. The rancorous debate continued over a period of several years without result. But, as one newspaper headline irreverently suggested, it did furnish some "Fun for the Fossils," and especially for Long John. A good fight was still his most bracing tonic.¹²

Until he passed his seventieth year, Wentworth's health was remarkably good for a man who carried three hundred pounds wherever he went. Back in the summer of 1874, to be sure, a "sunstroke" had driven him temporarily into the ranks of the total abstainers, but he had recovered completely from that misfortune. Ten years later, at the age of sixty-nine, he wrote to a friend: "It does not seem to me that I am old. I feel as young as ever; but when I look around for my old mates, I am brought to a realizing sense of things."¹³

His physical decline became rapid in 1886, after he had attended, in a drenching rain, the unveiling of a statue of Daniel Webster at Concord, New Hampshire. Two summers later, as he made his customary hot-weather pilgrimage to one of Waukesha's resort hotels, the old man was crippled to the verge of helplessness. "What's the matter with me?" he growled, repeating the question of a reporter. "Well, the doctors say it's rheumatism, but they lie. It's an incurable disease—old age."¹⁴

The presidential year had come again, and Long John's interest was fluttered by the contest between Cleveland and Harrison, although he suspected that he would not live to cast a vote. One of his final political pronouncements was a bridge spanning the decades back to his first term in Congress. In a letter to the *Tribune*, he complained that the Republican platform had failed to pledge support of river-and-harbor improvements.¹⁵

But the subject most often on his lips in those last days was his monument. Height was the physical characteristic that had set him apart from other men, and he was determined to have a grave marked by the loftiest tombstone in the West. He ordered it from the Hallowell Granite Company—a huge base weighing fifty tons, and a tapering shaft that would tower seventy feet in the air. "It's going to be just like me," said Long John, "a plain, unsophisticated monument. . . . No fixin's,

no gingerbread, not a nook or corner where a sparrow can come to build his nest and then defile it." The cost, including transportation from Maine, was estimated at thirty-five to forty thousand dollars, and Wentworth paid another ten thousand for his oversized lot in the northeast corner of Rosehill Cemetery.¹⁶

He hoped to see the great obelisk lifted into position, but death hovered too near. With the approach of autumn he slipped into unconsciousness, and in the morning of October 16, 1888, his life ended. "Long John is dead!" the newspapers proclaimed, filling their columns with reminiscences of the fallen giant, and judgments upon his career. Not everyone agreed with the eulogy spoken at his elaborate funeral, or with the laudatory resolution passed by the city council. But most Chicagoans could acknowledge the blemishes on John Wentworth's character and still mourn his departure deeply, for they knew that he symbolized—somehow more aptly than any other figure—the lusty, boisterous, colorful days of their city's youth.

Bibliographical Note

THIS ACCOUNT of John Wentworth's career in journalism, politics, and agriculture is based upon information drawn from numerous manuscript collections and a great variety of published materials. The yield per unit was often very modest. For example, the Martin Van Buren Collection in the Library of Congress contains one useful letter from Wentworth; there is a single but highly interesting reference to him in Tyler Dennett, ed., *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay* . . . (New York, 1939); and Clarence Lee Miller's monograph, *The States of the Old Northwest and the Tariff, 1865-1888* (Emporia, Kansas, 1929), throws light upon just one aspect of his final term in Congress. For occasional sources of this kind, citation in the footnotes seems sufficient. Moreover, the author will not attempt to list all of the works that have shaped his general understanding of the age in which Wentworth lived. The following paragraphs are written to indicate those sources relied upon most heavily in the preparation of the biography.

Although most of Wentworth's own private papers were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1871, there are letters from him or letters concerning him in the collections of many of his contemporaries. Especially useful were the John Wentworth Papers, William Ackerman Papers, Mason Brayman Papers, Edmund S. Kimberly Papers, William B. Ogden Papers, William H. Swift Papers, and the Autograph Letters series at the Chicago Historical Society; the Augustus C. French Papers, Ozias M. Hatch Papers, and Charles H. Lanphier Papers at the Illinois State Historical Library; the John Dean Caton Papers, Robert Todd Lincoln Collection of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, Lyman Trumbull Papers, and Elihu B. Washburne Papers at the Library of Congress; the Stephen A. Douglas Papers at the University of Chicago; the John Wentworth Letters in the

Illinois Central Railroad Archives at the Newberry Library; the John Wentworth folder and miscellaneous letters in the Dartmouth College Archives; and the David Davis Papers, photostats owned by Willard L. King of originals still in the possession of the Davis family.

Archives, public and private, yielded information concerning Wentworth's private affairs. Most important were the manuscript records of the United States Census, "Agricultural Productions," for the years 1860 and 1880; the "Register of Receipts, Chicago, 1846-1855," Federal Land Office Records; and the "Register of Certificates," Illinois and Michigan Canal Records—all in the Illinois State Archives; the inventory of Wentworth's estate in the Probate Records of Cook County; faculty and class records in the Dartmouth College Archives; and "Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad Company," two manuscript volumes in the offices of the Chicago and North Western Railway Company.

Among unpublished dissertations consulted, the following were most helpful: Granville D. Davis, "Factional Differences in the Democratic Party in Illinois, 1854-1858" (Ph.D., University of Illinois, 1936); M. Annette Sheel, "The Congressional Career of John Wentworth" (M.A., University of Chicago, 1935); and John Shup Wright, "The Background and Formation of the Republican Party in Illinois, 1846-1860" (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1946).

In the absence of a comprehensive collection of Wentworth's private papers, the most important single source of information was the fairly complete file of the *Chicago Democrat* at the Chicago Historical Society. Other newspapers were used extensively, including the *Chicago American*, *Chicago Democratic Press*, *Chicago Journal*, *Chicago Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Prairie Farmer* (Chicago), *Illinois State Register* (Springfield), *Illinois State Journal* (Springfield), and the *Washington (D.C.) Union*. Several collections of newspaper clippings were very helpful, especially the John Wentworth Scrapbook, the "History of Chicago Scrapbook," and the Charles Harpel Scrapbook (containing the reminiscences of Joseph K. C. Forrest)—all at the Chicago Historical Society; and the Sandwich Scrapbook at the New Hampshire Historical Society.

The *Congressional Globe* was of course indispensable for Wentworth's twelve years of service in the House of Rep-

representatives. Official returns in his first four elections are in Theodore Calvin Pease, *Illinois Election Returns, 1818-1848* (Springfield, 1923). Also useful were the *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Illinois, Convened at Springfield, January 7, 1862* (Springfield, 1862); and *Proceedings of the Republican National Convention . . . 1880* (Chicago, 1881).

There are autobiographical materials in Wentworth's *Congressional Reminiscences, Adams, Benton, Calhoun, Clay, and Webster* (*Fergus' Historical Series*, No. 24, Chicago, 1882); and in his *The Wentworth Genealogy: English and American* (3 vols., Boston, 1878). Biographical sketches appeared not infrequently during Wentworth's lifetime in such periodicals as *United States Magazine* (April, 1849), *Chicago Magazine* (August, 1857), and in such volumes as *Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men of Chicago* (Chicago, Wilson & St. Clair, 1868). The best brief summary of his career, however, is Carl Sandburg's essay in the *Dictionary of American Biography*. Ann Steinbrecher Windle, "John Wentworth, His Contributions to Chicago," in *Illinois State Historical Society, Papers in Illinois History and Transactions for the Year 1937* (Springfield, 1938), pp. 1-17, is laudatory but informative. More specialized are Don E. Fehrenbacher, "The Judd-Wentworth Feud," in *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 45:197-211 (Autumn, 1952); and Stanley L. Jones, "John Wentworth and Anti-Slavery in Chicago," in *Mid-America*, 36:147-160 (July, 1954).

Many references to Wentworth and a wealth of background material can be found in the Abraham Lincoln Association's *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by Roy P. Basler, Marion Dolores Pratt, and Lloyd A. Dunlap (8 vols. plus Index, New Brunswick, N.J., 1953-1955). Also useful were Milo M. Quaife, ed., *The Diary of James K. Polk During His Presidency . . .* (4 vols., Chicago, 1910); and Thomas J. McCormack, ed., *Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896* (2 vols., Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1909).

The secondary work most often consulted was the scholarly study still in progress by Bessie Louise Pierce, *A History of Chicago* (vol. 1-Chicago, 1937-). Much older, but still valuable, is Alfred T. Andreas, *History of Chicago from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (3 vols., Chicago, 1884-1886). Theodore Calvin Pease, *The Frontier State, 1818-1848*; and Ar-

thur Charles Cole, *The Era of the Civil War, 1848-1870*, (Vols. 2 and 3 in Clarence W. Alvord, ed., *The Centennial History of Illinois*, 5 vols., Chicago, 1918-1920), were also used extensively. Among biographies, George Fort Milton, *The Eve of Conflict: Stephen A. Douglas and the Needless War* (Boston, 1934); and Albert J. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858* (2 vols., Boston, 1928), were most useful. Charles M. Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun: Sectionalist, 1840-1850* (Indianapolis, 1951), and Holman Hamilton, *Zachary Taylor, Soldier in the White House* (Indianapolis, 1951), are excellent for details of congressional history. The years of crisis from Polk to Lincoln are covered ably and comprehensively by Allan Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union* (2 vols., New York, 1947), and *The Emergence of Lincoln* (2 vols., New York, 1950). Equally outstanding, but limited to the period of the Buchanan administration is Roy Franklin Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York, 1948). The following studies were also helpful: William E. Baringer, *Lincoln's Rise to Power* (Boston, 1937), for Illinois politics in the late 1850's; Avery Craven, *The Coming of the Civil War* (New York, 1942), a landmark in Civil War historiography; O. M. Dickerson, *The Illinois Constitutional Convention of 1862* (*University of Illinois Studies*, vol. 1, no. 9, Urbana, 1905); Lewis Ethan Ellis, "A History of the Chicago Delegation in Congress, 1843-1925," in *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 1930 (Springfield, 1930), pp. 52-149, which gives much attention to Wentworth in its earlier pages; John J. Flinn, *History of the Chicago Police from the Settlement of the Community to the Present Time* (Chicago, 1887); Paul Wallace Gates, *The Illinois Central Railroad and Its Colonization Work* (Cambridge, 1934); Joe L. Norris, "The Land Reform Movement," in *Papers in Illinois History and Transactions for the Year 1937*, pp. 73-82, which quotes extensively from the *Chicago Democrat*; Robert A. Smith, "The Wentworth Family," in *Twenty-Ninth Annual Excursion of the Sandwich Historical Society, August 19, 1948*; and Theodore Clarke Smith, *The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest* (New York, 1897).

And finally, the author turned again and again to the map collection at the Chicago Historical Society, especially when piecing together the record of Wentworth's numerous real estate transactions.

Notes

CHAPTER I

¹ Joseph B. Walker, *New Hampshire's Five Provincial Congresses, July 21, 1774–January 5, 1776* (Concord, New Hampshire, 1905), 71. For general information on the Wentworth family, see John Wentworth, *The Wentworth Genealogy: English and American* (3 vols., Boston, 1878).

² Francis B. Heitman, comp., *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (2 vols., Washington, D. C., 1903), 1:1019; Robert A. Smith, "The Wentworth Family," in *Twenty-Ninth Annual Excursion of the Sandwich Historical Society*, August 19, 1948, pp. 35–37.

³ Edwin A. Charlton, *New Hampshire as It Is* (Claremont, New Hampshire, 1856), 382.

⁴ Smith, "Wentworth Family," 36.

⁵ *Sandwich Reporter*, February 28, 1884, in *Sandwich Scrapbook*, New Hampshire Historical Society.

⁶ Sketches of John Wentworth's boyhood, drawn in all cases from his own later reminiscences, may be found in the *United States Magazine*, April, 1849; *Chicago Magazine*, August, 1857; *Hamptonia*, March 25, 1883, and October, 1885; *Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men of Chicago* (Chicago, Wilson & St. Clair, 1868); Alfred T. Andreas, *History of Chicago from the Earliest Period to the Present* (3 vols., Chicago, 1884–1886), 1:622–623.

⁷ G. G. Bush, *History of Education in New Hampshire* (*Contributions to American Educational History*, no. 22, U. S. Bureau of Education, *Circular of Information*, no. 3, Washington, D. C., 1898), 90–91; *Hamptonia*, October, 1885, pp. 5–6.

⁸ *A Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Academical and Theological Institution, New Hampton, New Hampshire, for the Year Ending November 18, 1831* (Concord, New Hampshire, 1831).

⁹ A. Chester Clark, "The Social Fraternity, Its History and Influence," in *Granite Monthly* (Manchester, New Hampshire), February, 1901, pp. 61–63.

¹⁰ *Hamptonia*, March 25, 1883, pp. 1–3, and October, 1885, pp. 5–6.

¹¹ For these and other general facts about Dartmouth College in the 1830's, I have depended upon two histories of the institution: John King Lord, *A History of Dartmouth College, 1815–1909* (Concord, New Hampshire, 1913), and Leon Burr Richardson, *History of Dartmouth*

College (2 vols., Hanover, New Hampshire, 1932). See also *Catalogue of Dartmouth College*, 1832, in the Archives Division of Dartmouth College Library.

¹² *Boston Museum*, quoted in *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 8, 1851; Class Bills and Scale of Merit, 1834, manuscript in the Dartmouth Archives.

¹³ Records of the Faculty of Dartmouth College, manuscripts in the Dartmouth Archives.

¹⁴ Solomon Laws to Nathan F. Laws, July 14, 1836, in the Dartmouth Archives.

¹⁵ Wentworth to Horatio Hill, January 9, 1837, printed in the *Chicago Times*, June 21, 1874.

¹⁶ Wentworth to Isaac Hill, April 5, 1836, in the Dartmouth Archives.

¹⁷ Roy F. Nichols, *Franklin Pierce, Young Hickory of the Granite Hills* (Philadelphia, 1931), 92–93.

¹⁸ Quoted in the *Sandwich Reporter*, September 18, 1884, in Sandwich Scrapbook, New Hampshire Historical Society. The manuscript diary was at that time in the hands of the Reverend Samuel Hidden Wentworth Lee, of Benington, Iowa.

¹⁹ Andreas, *Chicago*, 1:624. For other versions of Wentworth's account, see the works cited in note 6, above.

²⁰ Wentworth to Lydia Wentworth, November 9, 1836, in the John Wentworth Papers, Chicago Historical Society. This letter gives a full description of the trip between Detroit and Chicago, and I have relied upon it heavily. See also *The Dartmouth*, November 22, 1878, pp. 187–189.

²¹ Wentworth always celebrated October 25 as the date of his arrival in Chicago, but his letter to Lydia, cited above, which furnishes the only contemporary evidence, leaves no doubt that October 27 is correct.

²² Andreas, *Chicago*, 1:632; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, October 29, 1859. The building was at the corner of Lake and Market streets, where the Republican "Wigwam" was later constructed.

²³ Wentworth to Lydia Wentworth, November 10, 1836, in the Wentworth Papers.

²⁴ For a longer list of early arrivals, see Bessie L. Pierce, *A History of Chicago*, 1:176–177n (New York, 1937).

²⁵ Wentworth to Lydia Wentworth, November 10, 1836, in the Wentworth Papers.

CHAPTER II

¹ *Chicago American*, July 30, 1836.

² The manuscript contract is in the Chicago Historical Society Autograph Letters, 17:93.

³ *Chicago American*, December 17, 1836, May 13, 1837.

⁴ Wentworth to Hill, January 9, February 5, March 3, 1837. The manuscripts of these letters and those cited immediately below have not been found. They were printed in the *Chicago Times*, June 21, 1874, and a clipping is in the Wentworth Scrapbook (compiled by Charles Harpel), 3–5, in the Chicago Historical Society.

⁵ Same to same, January 9, February 16, 1837, clipping in the Wentworth Scrapbook. Wentworth later changed his motto to “Liberty and Economy.”

⁶ Same to same, February 5, 16, 1837; Peck to Hill, January 13, 1837, clipping in the Wentworth Scrapbook.

⁷ Wentworth to Hill, January 9, 1837, clipping in the Wentworth Scrapbook.

⁸ Autograph Letters, 17:93, Chicago Historical Society; Henry H. Hurlbut, *Chicago Antiquities* . . . (Chicago, 1881), 644. Peck later stated that he took Wentworth into partnership and gave him four or five hundred dollars a year to manage the paper, that profits were supposed to be divided equally between them, but that Wentworth never paid him a cent. *Illinois State Register* (Springfield), October 8, 1841.

⁹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, April 17, 1858; Pierce, *Chicago*, 1:67–68.

¹⁰ *Chicago Mail*, October 23, 1886, quoted in *The Dartmouth*, November 19, 1886; *Daily Chicago American*, October 6, 1840; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, September 12, 1857; Wentworth to Zebina Eastman, November 15, 1873, Wentworth Papers; form letter by Wentworth in his History of Chicago Scrapbook, vol. 4, Chicago Historical Society; Andreas, *Chicago*, 1:416. Bradley joined the *Democrat* in 1837, was briefly made a co-proprietor in 1840, but soon returned to an outright salary arrangement.

¹¹ K. K. Jones to the *Chicago Times*, April 13, 1879, in History of Chicago Scrapbook, vol. 1, Chicago Historical Society; *Galena Jeffersonian*, quoted in the *Illinois Journal* (Springfield), December 9, 1847; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, August 20, 21, 1851; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, July 16, 1859. Andreas, *Chicago*, 1:416–417, shows that three of the six men employed by Wentworth in 1837 were still working for him in 1845.

¹² *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, July 16, 1859.

¹³ *Chicago Democrat*, September 26, 1838, September 3, 1845.

¹⁴ *Daily Chicago American*, April 23, 1839.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, April 9, 1839, February 25, 1840, September 29, 1841.

¹⁶ *Chicago Democrat*, October 21, 1845. According to the *Chicago Daily American* of April 15, 1842, Wentworth was claiming at that time that fifty thousand people read the *Democrat* every week.

¹⁷ Wentworth to John Dean Caton, February 16, 1859, in the John Dean Caton Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁸ *La Porte Whig*, quoted in *Daily Chicago American*, December 21, 1839.

¹⁹ *Daily Chicago American*, March 13, June 5, 1840; Nellie Kinzie Gordon (Hunter's niece) to A. L. Hardy, March 21, 1910, Chicago Historical Society Manuscripts; Andreas, *Chicago*, 1:151–152.

²⁰ *Chicago Daily American*, December 8, 1841. The speech was given at a dinner in honor of Governor Thomas Carlin.

²¹ *Chicago Democrat*, quoted in the *Chicago American*, December 3, 1836; *Chicago Democrat*, September 25, 1839.

²² George William Dowrie, *The Development of Banking in Illinois, 1817–1863* (University of Illinois, *Studies in the Social Sciences*, vol. 2,

no. 4, Urbana, Illinois, 1913), 61; Theodore Calvin Pease, *The Frontier State, 1818–1848* (Illinois Centennial Commission, Springfield, 1919), 303–304.

²³ *Chicago Democrat*, August 16, 1837, September 26, 1838, September 25, 1839; *Chicago Morning Democrat*, March 21, 30, 1840.

²⁴ *Chicago Democrat*, May 1, 1839; *Chicago Morning Democrat*, June 9, 1841; *Illinois State Register* (Vandalia), June 7, 1839; Pierce, *Chicago*, 1:154–155. Wentworth was frequently accused of obtaining financial aid himself from the Chicago branch of the State Bank when he purchased the *Democrat*, but he denied it. History of Chicago Scrapbook, vol. 1, Chicago Historical Society; *Daily Chicago American*, February 26, 1840; *Sangamo Journal* (Springfield), November 27, 1845.

²⁵ *Chicago Democrat*, April 29, 1840; *Chicago Morning Democrat*, March 30, 1840; *Daily Chicago American*, September 16, 1840.

²⁶ *Illinois State Register* (Springfield), October 8, 1841.

²⁷ Executive Record, 3:230 (1837–1843), manuscript in the Illinois State Archives; *Sangamo Journal*, quoted in the *Daily Chicago American*, January 13, 1840. For a reproduction of the cartoon, see Andreas, *Chicago*, 3:838.

²⁸ *Chicago American*, April 15, 22, May 6, 13, 1837.

²⁹ Andreas, *Chicago*, 1:371; Theodore Calvin Pease, *Illinois Election Returns, 1818–1848* (Springfield, 1923), 109.

³⁰ *Chicago Democrat*, August 21, 1839; *Daily Chicago American*, March 30, 1840.

³¹ *Daily Chicago American*, February 20, 1840; *Chicago Democrat*, May 20, 1840; *Chicago Morning Democrat*, April 13, 1840.

³² *Daily Chicago American*, March 9, 1840.

³³ *Ibid.*, May 7, 11, 22, 30, July 13, 1840.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, July 29, August 3, 1840.

³⁵ *Chicago Democrat*, July 20, 1840; *Chicago Morning Democrat*, August 8, 1840.

³⁶ *Illinois State Register*, February 14, 1840; *Daily Chicago American*, September 12, 16, 18, 29, October 2, 1840.

³⁷ *Daily Chicago American*, November 3, 5, 1840. The Supreme Court justice was Theophilus W. Smith.

CHAPTER III

¹ *Illinois State Register* (Springfield), April 23, 1841.

² *Ibid.*, May 7, October 8, 1841; Pease, *Frontier State*, 229–231.

³ *Chicago Democrat*, August 3, 1842; *Chicago Daily American*, September 15, 1842.

⁴ *Illinois State Register*, February 14, 1840, April 23, 30, May 7, June 4, October 1, 29, 1841, September 9, 30, October 14, 1842.

⁵ *Ibid.*, March 19, April 9, October 1, 29, 1841; *Daily Chicago American*, April 14, 1841; *Ottawa Free Trader*, quoted in *ibid.*, October 14, 1842.

⁶ Pease, *Frontier State*, 289–290; William Radebaugh, *The Boundary Dispute between Illinois and Wisconsin* (Chicago, 1904), 136–138.

⁷ *Chicago Daily American*, June 2, 1842; Thomas Ford, *A History of*

Illinois . . . 1818-47 (2 vols., Chicago, 1945-1946), 2:74; Elijah Middlebrook Haines, John Wentworth's First Election to Congress, part 2, p. 4, manuscript in the Chicago Historical Society.

⁸ *Illinois State Register*, November 4, December 2, 16, 22, 1843. Wentworth and Walters were somewhat drawn together by a libel suit instituted against both of them by Theophilus Smith for an article which both editors had reprinted from a third paper. See the *Chicago Democrat*, November 22, 1843.

⁹ Haines, John Wentworth's First Election, part 1, p. 9; *Daily Chicago American*, May 31, August 10, 1841; *Chicago Weekly American*, June 1, 29, 1842; *Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men of Chicago*, 678.

¹⁰ *Chicago Daily American*, October 14, 15, 1842.

¹¹ *Illinois State Register*, May 12, 1843; Haines, John Wentworth's First Election, part 1, pp. 5-7.

¹² Haines, John Wentworth's First Election, part 1, pp. 7-9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, part 2, pp. 3-5; *Illinois State Register*, June 30, 1843.

¹⁴ *Illinois State Register*, August 4, 1843; *Chicago Democrat*, June 5, 1844; Pease, *Election Returns*, 138.

¹⁵ Haines, John Wentworth's First Election, part 1, p. 2; *Chicago Weekly Journal*, May 11, 1846.

¹⁶ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston, 1946), 406-410; Charles M. Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun: Sectionalist, 1840-1850* (Indianapolis, 1951), 89, 114.

¹⁷ Wiltse, *Calhoun: Sectionalist*, 146-147.

¹⁸ *Congressional Globe*, 28 Congress, 1 session, 4.

¹⁹ Pease, *Election Returns*, 135-141.

²⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 28 Congress, 1 session, 57, 63, 341-344; John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs* . . . (12 vols., Philadelphia, 1874-1877), 11: 521-522.

²¹ *Chicago Democrat*, December 20, 1843.

²² *Ibid.*, March 20, 1844.

²³ *Congressional Globe*, 28 Congress, 1 session, 34-35.

²⁴ *Baltimore Patriot* and *New York Express*, quoted in the *Chicago Weekly Journal*, July 27, 1846; *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 1108. According to the official report in the latter, there was "a scene of confusion and merriment such as has seldom been witnessed in the Hall."

²⁵ *Chicago Democrat*, June 19, 1844; *Congressional Globe*, 28 Congress, 1 session, 107, 125, 699; *House Journal*, 28 Congress, 1 session, 1209-1210; *Senate Journal*, 28 Congress, 1 session, 342, 351.

²⁶ *Congressional Globe*, 31 Congress, 2 session (Appendix), 250.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 Congress, 1 session (Appendix), 55-58.

²⁸ *National Intelligencer* (Washington, D. C.), April 20, 1844; *Congressional Globe*, 28 Congress, 1 session, 506-507, 558-559, 563-565, 567-568; Adams, *Memoirs*, 12:13. Wentworth insisted the next day that he had said "My God" instead of "By God," an expression, according to Adams, of "deep sensibility," but not profane.

²⁹ *Senate Journal*, 28 Congress, 1 session, 317, 359; United States

Statutes at Large, 5:661–662; Pierce, Chicago, 1:93–94. The total appropriation was \$588,000.

³⁰ Adams, *Memoirs*, 11:538, 546, 12:16; *Congressional Globe*, 28 Congress, 1 session, 477, 507, 578, and Appendix, 509–514.

³¹ *Congressional Globe*, 28 Congress, 1 session, 387–390, 622–623, 741.

³² *Ibid.*, 107, 345, 408, 434, 443.

³³ *Ibid.*, 191 and Appendix, 89–92.

³⁴ *Chicago Democrat*, December 27, 1843, January 3, 1844.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, January 26, 1844.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, May 15, 1844.

³⁷ Wentworth to Van Buren, December 26, 1843, in the Martin Van Buren Papers, Library of Congress; *Chicago Democrat*, May 22, June 5, 1844.

³⁸ *Congressional Globe*, 28 Congress, 1 session, 680.

CHAPTER IV

¹ *Chicago Democrat*, May 22, 1844. Wentworth somehow got possession of this letter, written by S. Lisle Smith, and caused it to be published in the *Democrat*. He explained that it had been picked up on a street in Washington and mailed to him, but Hardin charged that it had been pilfered from his desk on the House floor. The cry of “thief” followed Long John throughout the campaign. See the *Chicago Weekly Journal*, June 17, 1844; *Chicago Democrat*, August 7, 1844; *Western Citizen* (Chicago), August 15, 1844; Pease, *Frontier State*, 298.

² *Chicago Democrat*, June 12, 1844.

³ *Cleveland Herald*, June 26, July 6, 1844.

⁴ *Chicago Democrat*, July 10, August 7, 1844; *Western Citizen*, July 25, 1844.

⁵ *Western Citizen*, July 25, 1844; *Chicago Weekly Journal*, July 29, August 19, 1844; *Chicago Democrat*, August 14, 1844.

⁶ *Chicago Democrat*, August 7, 1844; Pease, *Election Returns*, 142–148.

⁷ *Chicago Democrat*, August 14, 1844.

⁸ *Ibid.*, October 2, 1844.

⁹ *Troy Daily Whig*, November 14, 1844. The minister was Nathan Beman, stepfather of William Lowndes Yancey.

¹⁰ *Chicago Democrat*, December 17, 1844, January 1, 8, 22, 1845; *Chicago Weekly Journal*, December 9, 1844, April 21, 1845; *Chicago Daily Journal*, November 26, 1844, quoted in the *Chicago Evening Post*, April 11, 1910. See also Wentworth to John D. Caton, December 27, 1844, and February 3, 1845; Mark Skinner to Caton, January 6, 1845; Caton to Wentworth, January 10, 1845; all in the Caton Papers, Library of Congress.

¹¹ Alexander Loyd to William B. Ogden, March 6, 11, 1845, in the William B. Ogden Papers, Chicago Historical Society; *Chicago Democrat*, January 1, 1845.

¹² *House Journal*, 28 Congress, 2 session, 9, 177, 201, 306, 500–503, 513–514, 607; *Chicago Democrat*, March 26, 1845.

¹³ *Chicago Democrat*, December 18, 1844; *Congressional Globe*, 28 Congress, 2 session, 7; Adams, *Memoirs*, 12:115-116.

¹⁴ *House Journal*, 28 Congress, 2 session, 264-265, 533.

¹⁵ *Chicago Democrat*, January 13, 1846; *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 65.

¹⁶ *Congressional Globe*, 28 Congress, 2 session, 36, 63, 199-201.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 232, 236-237, 388, and 29 Congress, 1 session, 206; *Chicago Democrat*, April 2, 1845.

¹⁸ *Chicago Democrat*, September 3, October 8, 1845.

¹⁹ *A Short History of the Printing Press* (Printed for Robert Hoe, New York, 1902), 10-12, 17-20.

²⁰ *Chicago Democrat*, October 8, 1845; *Weekly Chicago Democrat* (the name of the weekly edition after June 23, 1846), December 22, 1846; *Chicago Daily Journal*, December 18, 1846.

²¹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 11, 1847, July 16, 1859.

²² *Sangamo Journal* (Springfield), August 21, 1845.

²³ *Daily Democratic Press* (Chicago), September 15, 1854. Wentworth also used his franking privilege upon occasion to sell subscriptions to the *Democrat*; see Wentworth to Leander Bump, July, 1851, in the Wentworth Papers, Chicago Historical Society. For a fuller description of the relationship between the press and post office in local politics, see Don E. Fehrenbacher, "The Post Office in Illinois Politics," in *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 46:64-66 (Spring, 1953).

²⁴ *Illinois State Register* (Springfield), August 22, September 5, October 10, 17, 1845, February 20, 1846. Walters died on July 29, 1846, but his brother-in-law, Charles Lanphier, who assumed the editorship, was of the same mind on the subject of Wentworth.

²⁵ *Chicago Democrat*, November 25, 1845, January 27, 1846; *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 205-207.

²⁶ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 206-207.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 346-350; *Chicago Democrat*, February 24, March 3, 1846. The House did reject the same day a proposal to give specific approval to a settlement at the forty-ninth parallel, but the resolution giving notice of termination provided that nothing therein was intended to interfere with negotiations for an amicable settlement. Debated at length in the Senate, and then returned to the House with amendments, the notice was not finally signed by the president until April 27.

²⁸ *Chicago Democrat*, March 24, April 28, 1846; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 30, 1846.

²⁹ *Chicago Democrat*, April 28, May 5, 1846.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, June 9, 1846.

³¹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, July 14, 21, 1846; *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 976, 1053.

³² *Chicago Democrat*, April 14, May 5, 1846; *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 120, 595, 1108, 1178; Lewis Ethan Ellis, "A History of the Chicago Delegation in Congress, 1843-1925," in *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 1930 (Springfield, 1930), 124.

³³ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 120, 530-531; *Chicago Democrat*, January 20, March 3, 17, 24, 1846.

³⁴ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 530; *Chicago Democrat*, April 7, 1846.

³⁵ *St. Louis Republican*, quoted in the *Chicago Democrat*, April 28, 1846. See also reprints from the *Galena Jeffersonian* and the *Detroit Free Press* in the *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, August 4, 18, 1846.

³⁶ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 1084, 1094; *House Journal*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 1096–1097.

³⁷ *Senate Journal*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 443; John Wentworth, *Congressional Reminiscences*, Adams, Benton, Calhoun, Clay, and Webster (Fergus' Historical Series, Chicago, 1882), 37–38; Claude M. Fuess, *Daniel Webster* (2 vols., Boston, 1930), 2:165–166.

³⁸ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 1181–1183; *Chicago Democrat*, March 3, 1846; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, August 11, 1846.

³⁹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, August 11, September 1, 8, 15, 29, 1846.

⁴⁰ Wentworth to John D. Caton, March 23, 1846, in the Caton Papers.

⁴¹ *Little Fort Porcupine and Democratic Banner*, June 30, July 7, 14, 21, 1846; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, July 28, August 4, 1846. The *Chicago Weekly Journal* had made the same charge on February 16, 1846. The inventory of Wentworth's estate in the Probate Records of Cook County substantiate his statement at the time that he paid \$15 an acre for the land, which lay directly south of the city. This was a reasonable price in 1845. The northernmost thirty acres were the most valuable, and Wentworth soon sold them to C. R. Starkweather for \$35 an acre. The *Democrat* published letters from both Stephen A. Douglas and Secretary of the Treasury Robert Walker denying that Wentworth had acted in behalf of Smith's company.

⁴² *Chicago Weekly Journal*, May 18, 1846; *Chicago Democrat*, May 19, June 9, 1846; Pease, *Election Returns*, 156.

⁴³ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 1 session, 1217, 1221; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, July 21, 1846; *Chicago Weekly Journal*, July 27, 1846.

⁴⁴ *Chicago Daily American*, December 8, 1841; *Chicago Democrat*, August 16, 1837; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 23, 30, 1846. Wentworth later asserted that he was one of the Democrats who consulted with Wilmot and planned the introduction of the Proviso, but there is no evidence other than his own words to support this claim. See the *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, January 30, 1849.

CHAPTER V

¹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, November 3, 1846. In a speech at the Calumet Club's reception of old Chicago settlers on May 27, 1879, Wentworth denied that he had ever "cultivated a crop" of whiskers, but there are several portraits which indicate that he experimented briefly with them in his middle thirties. One, dated 1849, appeared in the *Chicago Magazine*, August, 1857, p. 390.

² Wentworth's attitudes toward the South, slavery, and abolitionism in 1846 are well illustrated by his reaction to the release of a recaptured

fugitive slave by an angry mob. The *Weekly Chicago Democrat* of November 3, 1846, declared: "Sick are we of the domineering of the South—much as they deserve to be mobbed who first commenced mobbing—wrong as slavery is in principle—we cannot refrain giving our entire condemnation of all proceedings which weaken the arm of judicial authority."

³ *Illinois State Register* (Springfield), April 7, 1848; Andreas, *Chicago*, 1:372.

⁴ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, January 20, October 6, 13, 27, November 3, December 1, 1846, April 6, 1847, August 29, 1848; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, January 11, 1848; Pierce, *Chicago*, 1:129, 169–170.

⁵ *Chicago Commercial Advertiser*, September 12, 19, October 3, 1849.

⁶ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, January 11, February 22, 1848. For a description of the campaign against land monopoly in Chicago, with many quotations from the *Chicago Democrat*, see Joe L. Norris, "The Land Reform Movement," in *Papers in Illinois History and Transactions for the Year 1937* (Illinois State Historical Society, Springfield, 1938), 73–82.

⁷ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 2 session, 105, 187, 198, 424–425, 472, 555, 571, 573. Both in 1846 and in 1847, the Wilmot Proviso was attached as an amendment to a special appropriation (first for \$2,000,000, and later for \$3,000,000) requested by Polk for facilitating a peace treaty with Mexico.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 9, 310–313.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 102; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, January 26, 1847.

¹⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 2 session, 229, 536–539; Milo M. Quaife, ed., *The Diary of James K. Polk during his Presidency . . .* (4 vols., Chicago, 1910), 2:347.

¹¹ *Washington Union*, February 3, 1847; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, February 23, 1847; *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 2 session, 310–313.

¹² *Congressional Globe*, 29 Congress, 2 session, 322–323, 341–343, 349–352; *Washington Union*, February 6, 8, 1847.

¹³ Ford to William B. Ogden, February 14, 1847, in the Ogden Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

¹⁴ Robert Fergus, ed., *Chicago River-and-Harbor Convention, July 5th, 6th, and 7th, 1847* (Chicago, 1882), 25; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 4, 1847; Pierce, *Chicago*, 1:394–396. See also Mentor L. Williams, "The Chicago River and Harbor Convention, 1847," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 35: 607–626 (March, 1949).

¹⁵ Pierce, *Chicago*, 1:396–397, 425–428; Fergus, ed., *River-and-Harbor Convention*, 152; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 18, July 6, 13, August 3, 1847.

¹⁶ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Congress, 1 session, 30–33.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 62. The exclamation by Wentworth was quoted several years later by McClernand in *ibid.*, 31 Congress, 2 session (Appendix), 250.

¹⁸ Quaife, ed., *Diary of James K. Polk*, 4:65; *Congressional Globe*, 30 Congress, 1 session, 269, 894–896, 918, 1063.

¹⁹ Wentworth to Edmund S. Kimberly, June 26, 1848, in the Edmund S. Kimberly Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

²⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Congress, 1 session, 950, 1002, 1006–1007.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1061–1063, 1078; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, September 19, 1848.

²² The popular sovereignty doctrine had been suggested earlier by other men, but the Nicholson letter was its first “really full exposition.” Allan Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union* (2 vols., New York, 1947), 1:29–30.

²³ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, November 23, 1847, February 29, March 7, 21, 1848; *Chicago Daily Journal*, February 23, 24, April 3, 1848; *Illinois State Register*, March 10, April 7, May 24, 1848; Charles H. Lanphier to McClelland, January 16 [1848], in the John McClelland Papers; McClelland to Lanphier, March 4, 1848, and McRoberts to Lanphier, March 1, April 14, 1848, in the Charles H. Lanphier Papers; Mark Skinner to Augustus C. French, February 29, 1848, and Wentworth to French, April 13, 1848, in the Augustus C. French Papers; all manuscripts in the Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield. Wentworth favored selection of the delegates by the individual judicial districts, hoping that several Proviso Democrats would thereby be included in the delegation. Two northern districts attempted to force the hand of the Democratic state convention by electing delegates according to this plan. At the state convention, the dispute was compromised. The two men already chosen by the northern districts were retained in the delegation, but only after giving assurances that they would follow the instructions of the convention. See *Illinois State Register*, May 5, 1848; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 16, 1848.

²⁴ Wentworth to Edmund S. Kimberly, June 26, 1848, in the Kimberly Papers.

²⁵ David L. Gregg to Charles H. Lanphier, February 14, 1848, in the Lanphier Papers, Illinois State Historical Library; Edmund S. Kimberly to Douglas, April 10, 1848, in the Stephen A. Douglas Papers, University of Chicago; *Chicago Daily Journal*, May 30, 31, June 5, 1848; *Springfield (Mass.) Republican*, quoted in the *Chicago Daily Journal*, June 17, 1848.

²⁶ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 13, 20, 27, 1848; *Chicago Daily Journal*, June 8, 1848; *Illinois State Register*, June 16, 1848; McRoberts to Charles H. Lanphier, June 15, 1848, in the Lanphier Papers.

²⁷ Wentworth to Edmund S. Kimberly, June 17, 1848, in the Kimberly Papers; Wentworth to Augustus C. French, June 23, 1848, in the French Papers.

²⁸ Wentworth to Edmund S. Kimberly, July 23, 1848, in the Kimberly Papers; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 20, 1848.

²⁹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, July 11, 18, 1848; *Illinois State Register*, July 7, 14, 1848.

³⁰ *Western Citizen* (Chicago), June 20, July 25, 1848; *Congressional Globe*, 30 Congress, 1 session, 966–967, 986.

³¹ Wentworth to Edmund S. Kimberly, June 26, 1848, in the Kimberly Papers; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, August 22, 1848.

³² *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, August 22, September 5, 12, 1848;

Chicago Daily Journal, October 24, 1848; Wentworth to Edmund S. Kimberly, June 27, 1848, in the Kimberly Papers; Wentworth to Sidney Breese, October 10, 1848, in the Sidney Breese Papers, Illinois State Historical Library.

³³ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, November 4, 6, 1848; *Chicago Daily Journal*, November 4, 1848; Pierce, *Chicago*, 1:424; Arthur Charles Cole, *The Era of the Civil War, 1848-1870* (Illinois Centennial Commission, Springfield, 1919), 61.

³⁴ Cole, *Era of the Civil War*, 61; *Illinois Journal* (Springfield), December 6, 1848.

³⁵ Theodore Clarke Smith, *The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest* (New York, 1897), 150-151.

³⁶ Many Free-Soilers soon came to the same conclusion and in various states began to rejoin or coalesce with one major party or the other. According to Smith, *Liberty and Free Soil Parties*, 220-226, it was this trend, more than the Compromise of 1850, that caused the disintegration of the independent Free-Soil movement.

³⁷ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, November 21, 1848, February 27, 1849.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, December 26, 1848. For a charge that Wentworth was plotting to "convert the democracy of Illinois to Van Buren abolitionism," see the *Illinois State Register*, December 1, 1848.

CHAPTER VI

¹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, January 2, 1849.

² *Congressional Globe*, 30 Congress, 2 session, 39, 71.

³ *Ibid.*, 1, 21, 262, 381; George Fort Milton, *The Eve of Conflict: Stephen A. Douglas and the Needless War* (Boston, 1934), 45.

⁴ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Congress, 2 session, 38, 55-56, 83-84.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 210-216, 415-422; Wiltse, *Calhoun: Sectionalist*, 378-388.

⁶ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Congress, 2 session, 561, 613, 638, 656, 662-665, 680, 695-696; *Boston Courier*, quoted in *Chicago Daily Democrat*, March 30, 1849; *New York Post*, quoted in *ibid.*, April 4, 1849.

⁷ *Congressional Globe*, 30 Congress, 2 session, 682-691.

⁸ Quoted in *Chicago Daily Democrat*, April 14, 1849.

⁹ *Illinois Journal* (Springfield), April 13, May 16, 1849; *Illinois Daily Journal*, May 4, 1849; *Commercial Advertiser*, April 25, 1849; *Illinois State Register* (Springfield), June 21, August 23, 1849.

¹⁰ C. and C. Zarley to Augustus C. French, August 15, 1849, and Wentworth to French, May 28, 1849, in the French Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield; Cole, *Era of the Civil War*, 61-63.

¹¹ Cole, *Era of the Civil War*, 61-63; John Shup Wright, *The Background and Formation of the Republican Party in Illinois, 1846-1860*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1946, p. 54.

¹² *Chicago Daily Democrat*, December 12, 1849.

¹³ For a detailed account of the speakership contest, see Holman Hamilton, *Zachary Taylor, Soldier in the White House* (Indianapolis, 1951), 243-253.

¹⁴ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, December 22, 1849; *Congressional Globe*, 31 Congress, 1 session, 2–27.

¹⁵ *Congressional Globe*, 31 Congress, 1 session, 31–66; *House Journal*, 31 Congress, 1 session, 161–163; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, January 19, 1850; Howell Cobb to Mrs. Cobb, December 22, 1849, in Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, ed., *The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb* (2 vols., American Historical Association, *Annual Report*, 1911, Washington, D. C., 1913), 2:179–180.

¹⁶ *Congressional Globe*, 31 Congress, 1 session, 138, 157, 187–188.

¹⁷ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, February 2, March 9, 1850.

¹⁸ *Congressional Globe*, 31 Congress, 1 session, 347.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 375–385. At one point in the fantastic proceedings, the House engaged in a roll-call vote upon excusing Mr. Jones from voting on a motion of Mr. Thompson to lay on the table an appeal by Mr. Carter from the decision of the chair that Mr. Brown was in order in requesting to be excused from voting on a request by Mr. Cabell to be excused from voting on a motion by Mr. Campbell to lay on the table Mr. Mason's motion to reconsider the vote by which the House refused to lay on the table the resolution of Mr. Doty.

²⁰ Milton, *Eve of Conflict*, 58–59, 67–68; George Rawlings Poage, *Henry Clay and the Whig Party* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1936), 206–207, 225.

²¹ *Congressional Globe*, 31 Congress, 1 session, 424, 443, 550, 598, 963.

²² *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 16, 23, 1850; Wentworth to Edmund S. Kimberly, May 5, 1850, in the Kimberly Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

²³ *Congressional Globe*, 31 Congress, 1 session, 986–988, 1173–1226, 1443–1444.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1505, 1519, 1547, 1746–1764.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1769–1776.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1807, 1837; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, September 21, 1850.

²⁷ Isaac Diller to Douglas, September 16, 1850, and Daniel Shaw to Douglas, January 24, 1852, in the Douglas Papers, University of Chicago; *Illinois State Register*, August 1, 1850. The *Register* of September 26 carried two columns of quotations from other Democratic newspapers denouncing Wentworth.

²⁸ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, July 19, 1850; *Chicago Daily Journal*, July 25, August 29, 1850.

²⁹ *Chicago Daily Journal*, September 5, 14, October 19, 1850; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, September 7, October 12, 26, 1850; *Western Citizen*, September 17, 1850; *Illinois State Register*, October 17, 31, 1850.

³⁰ *Illinois State Register*, November 21, 1850.

CHAPTER VII

¹ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, January 23, 1851; *Congressional Globe*, 31 Congress, 2 session, 16.

² *Senate Journal*, 30 Congress, 1 session, 125, 129, 314; *House Journal*, 30 Congress, 1 session, 1270, 1274; *Congressional Globe*, 30 Con-

gress, 2 session, 58, 410, 698; Paul Wallace Gates, *The Illinois Central Railroad and Its Colonization Work* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1934), 26–30; Cole, *Era of the Civil War*, 36–38.

³ *Congressional Globe*, 31 Congress, 1 session, 78, 88, 900–904.

⁴ John Bell Sanborn, *Congressional Grants of Land in Aid of Railways* (University of Wisconsin, *Bulletin No. 30*, Madison, 1899), 29n.

⁵ Wentworth, *Congressional Reminiscences*, 40–42; Wentworth to William Ackerman, January 21, 1883, in the William Ackerman Papers, Chicago Historical Society; Gates, *Illinois Central Railroad*, 34–36. The testimony of a certain A. R. Corbin before a House investigating committee in 1858 tends to corroborate Wentworth's story. "There were a great many New England men here then," he said, "and they were exceedingly anxious to have the aid of the Illinois members in effecting the modification of the tariff. . . . John Wentworth was the principal manager of the Illinois bill, and he insisted upon some arrangement being made with the tariff men, between whom, himself and others, much conversation ensued." *House Reports*, 35 Congress, 1 session, vol. 4, no. 414 (Serial 967), pages 60–61. Corbin was not renowned for his veracity, however, and it is hard to believe that Long John could have convinced the tariff bloc of his ability to deliver the votes of men like John McClelland and William A. Richardson—both of whom detested him. Still, there is some basis for suspecting that Western Democrats may have indicated a willingness to give ground on the tariff and then reneged when the land-grant bill was safely approved. See statements of George Ashmun, with resulting arguments and votes, in the *Congressional Globe*, 31 Congress, 1 session, 1950–1951, and the statement of Edward Cabell on page 1953. Sidney Breese hinted mysteriously at some kind of bargain when he wrote Douglas: "It was the votes of Massachusetts and New York that passed the bill, and you and I know how they were had." Breese to Douglas, January 25, 1851, published in the *Chicago Daily Democrat*, February 24, 1851.

⁶ Breese to Douglas, January 25, 1851, in the *Chicago Daily Democrat*, February 24, 1851; Wentworth, *Congressional Reminiscences*, 40–41.

⁷ *Congressional Globe*, 31 Congress, 1 session, 1838; Sanborn, *Congressional Grants*, 35n; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, September 24, 1850.

⁸ George W. Billings to Mason Brayman, November 15, 17, December [exact date not given], 1850, in the Mason Brayman Papers, Chicago Historical Society; Gates, *Illinois Central Railroad*, 49–51.

⁹ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, August 1, 1850, January 11, 21, 1851.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, January 11, 1851; Wentworth to William Ackerman, December 17, 1882, in the Ackerman Papers, and George W. Billings to Mason Brayman, November 15, 17, 1850, in the Brayman Papers; Gates, *Illinois Central Railroad*, 61. A manuscript copy of the proposed charter in the Brayman Papers, which may or may not be the final draft, contains an interlinear insertion providing that the governor should be a member of the board. The handwriting could be Wentworth's.

¹¹ Wentworth to Robert Schuyler, December 28, 30, 1851, and January 3, 5, 1852 [misdated 1851]; Wentworth to George Griswold, January 8, 1852, in the John Wentworth Letters in the Illinois Central Railroad

Archives, Newberry Library, Chicago. Also *Chicago Daily Democrat*, February 22, June 11, December 13, 19, 1851, January 1, 2, 6, 1852; Pierce, *Chicago*, 2:56–57.

¹² *Daily Chicago Times*, May 1, 1856.

¹³ Gates, *Illinois Central Railroad*, 63; Wentworth to William Ackerman, December 17, 1882, in the Ackerman Papers; Stock Ledger, 1:228 (March, 1851, to October, 1856), in the Illinois Central Railroad Archives. Wentworth stated to Ackerman that he disposed of his stock because he feared political repercussions when Schuyler, shortly after resigning as president of the Illinois Central, was exposed as a defaulter in his management of another railroad. This is demonstrably untrue, since the Schuyler scandal broke in July, 1854—four months *before* Wentworth bought his stock. That Wentworth knew of the scandal at the time he made his purchase is demonstrated in his letter to Brayman, August 10, 1854, in the Brayman Papers.

¹⁴ Joseph K. C. Forrest, "Old-Time Facts and Fancies," in the Charles Harpel Scrapbook, 245, Chicago Historical Society. In these reminiscences, published as a regular column in the *Chicago Daily News* during the 1880's, Forrest declares that Wentworth wanted a more conservative assistant editor after the Compromise of 1850 had been effected (presumably to offset the antislavery radicalism of Forrest himself, who was still a member of the *Democrat's* editorial staff), and that he tried two other men before hiring James Brayman.

¹⁵ *Chicago Mail*, October 23, 1886, quoted in *The Dartmouth*, November 19, 1886. In Tract Book 460, p. 125, of the Cook County land records, Chicago, lots 7 and 8 of the Fort Dearborn Addition are labeled: "Wentworth and Waughop's Subdivision of Lots 7 & 8."

¹⁶ Register of Receipts, Chicago, 1846–1855, receipts numbered 23968, 24020, 24337–38, 28588–89, in the Federal Land Office records in the Illinois State Archives, Springfield.

¹⁷ Inventory of the estate of John Wentworth, in the Probate Records of Cook County, Chicago; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, April 2, 1853.

¹⁸ See above, pages 68–69; Wentworth to Lucius Lyon, September 27, December 9, 1845, and January 5, 1846, in the Lucius Lyon Papers, University of Michigan; Map of Chicago, compiled by Rees and Rucker, 1849, in the Chicago Historical Society.

¹⁹ Register of Certificates (IM–L17–Lands, 1848–1855), certificates numbered 1264–74, 1308, 1466, in the records of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, Illinois State Archives; Map of Chicago and Environs, J. M. Lowe, 1854, in the Chicago Historical Society.

²⁰ Register of Certificates (IM–L18–Lots, 1848–1855); *Chicago Daily Democrat*, May 12, 1851; Inventory of Wentworth's estate; James William Putnam, *The Illinois and Michigan Canal: A Study in Economic History* (Chicago, 1918), 81.

²¹ Wentworth to Davis, May 22, 1852, in the David Davis Papers (photostats owned by Mr. Willard R. King of Chicago, of originals in possession of the Davis Family). See Wentworth's advertisement headed: "Fencing Wanted," in the *Chicago Daily Democrat*, June 16, 1851.

²² Wentworth to Douglas, December 29, 1852, in the Douglas Papers, University of Chicago; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 21, 1853.

In both transactions Wentworth received \$6,000 in cash, with the balance to be paid over a period of several years.

²³ Register of Certificates (IM-L17-Lands, 1848-1855), certificates numbered 1767-74, 1834, 2211-12; Wentworth to William H. Swift, July 15, September 1, 10, 1853, March 23, April 7, 1854; Wentworth to David Leavitt, July 6, 1853; Leavitt to Swift, September 2, 1853; E. S. Prescott to Swift, March 31, 1854; all letters in the William H. Swift Papers, Chicago Historical Society; Inventory of Wentworth's estate. By 1855 Wentworth owned Sections 7 and 17, and half of Section 18, in town 38 north, range 13 east.

²⁴ Wentworth to Davis, June 25, July 1, 16, August 19, 1854, in the Davis Papers (King photostats).

²⁵ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, October 28, 1854, April 28, May 19, 26, June 9, 1855; *Prairie Farmer* (Chicago), June, July, and August, 1855, pp. 184-185, 223, 248.

²⁶ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 21, 1853; *Illinois Daily Journal* (Springfield), March 16, 1854. Paul Wentworth died in 1855. The inventory of his estate, in the probate records of Merrimack County at Concord, New Hampshire, shows a note against his son John for \$4,294.45, at 10 per cent interest.

²⁷ Wright, Republican Party, 109-110.

²⁸ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, February 6, May 9, 1851; *Chicago Daily Journal*, April 29, May 7, 1851.

²⁹ George W. Billings to Mason Brayman, May 22, 1851, in the Brayman Papers.

³⁰ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, May 22, 23, June 15, July 11, 1851.

³¹ *Ibid.*, April 9, 13, 14, 1852; *Chicago Daily Journal*, April 14, 1852.

³² *Chicago Daily Democrat*, April 24, 28, 1852.

³³ *Ibid.*, October 15, 1851.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, June 5, 1852. Joseph Forrest later asserted that Wentworth was delighted at Douglas' failure to win the nomination. "Old-Time Facts and Fancies," in the Harpel Scrapbook, 245.

³⁵ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, August 14, 31, September 2, 8, 10, 16, 1852; *Illinois Daily Journal*, August 19, 1852; *Daily Democratic Press* (Chicago), September 17, 1852.

³⁶ *Chicago Daily Journal*, October 2, 11, 1852; *Illinois Daily Journal*, September 10, 1852, quoting from the *Democratic Argus* (Chicago); Robert H. Morris to Fish, October 19, 1852, in the Hamilton Fish Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁷ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, November 4, 11, 1852. In Cook County, Wentworth ran more than four hundred votes behind Matteson, but he still defeated Aldrich, 3,423 to 2,493. His majority in the rest of the district was less than two hundred.

³⁸ Wentworth to Douglas, November 14, December 12, 1854, in the Douglas Papers.

³⁹ Same to same, December 29, 1852.

⁴⁰ Same to same, December 29, 1852 (a second letter written the same day).

⁴¹ Same to same, February 14, 1853.

⁴² Hoyne to Douglas, March 19, 1853, and Charles H. Lanphier to Douglas, November 21, 1853, in the Douglas Papers.

⁴³ All quoted in the *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, February 5, 1853.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, December 17, 1853.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, January 14, 1854.

CHAPTER VIII

¹ The “Appeal” is printed in *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 1 session, 281–282.

² Wentworth to David Wheeler, February 26, 1854, published in the *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, August 19, 1854.

³ *Chicago Daily Journal*, January 25, 26, March 10, 1854; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, February 4, 1854.

⁴ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 11, 1854.

⁵ Hoyne to Douglas, March 18, 1854, in the Douglas Papers, University of Chicago; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, April 15, 1854.

⁶ *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 1 session, 986–989; Wentworth, *Congressional Reminiscences*, 51–56. According to the *Reminiscences*, Benton later gave a dinner in Wentworth’s honor to show his appreciation.

⁷ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 13, 20, 27, June 3, 1854.

⁸ *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 1 session, 1254; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 3, 1854.

⁹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 3, 1854.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, May 27, 1854.

¹¹ Brayman Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

¹² *Daily Democratic Press* (Chicago), September 29, October 2, 1854.

¹³ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 24, 1854; *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 1 session, 1843, and Appendix, 1185, 1210.

¹⁴ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, August 12, 19, September 16, 1854; Douglas to James Sheahan, September 14, 1854, quoted in Granville D. Davis, *Factional Differences in the Democratic Party in Illinois, 1854–1858*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 1936, p. 42.

¹⁵ *Free West* (Chicago), September 7, 1854; *Daily Democratic Press*, September 22, 1854; Richard Wilson to Elihu B. Washburne, September 19, 1854, in the Elihu B. Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁶ *Daily Democratic Press*, August 12, September 19, 22, 1854; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, September 30, October 7, 1854; *Chicago Daily Journal*, October 2, 1854. On Wentworth’s withdrawal the *Journal* commented: “Like a good dog, he is going downstairs before he gets kicked down.”

¹⁷ *Daily Democratic Press*, October 4, 1854; *Chicago Daily Journal*, November 3, 4, 8, 1854; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, November 4, 25, 1854.

¹⁸ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, November 11, 18, 1854.

¹⁹ Lincoln to Washburne, December 14, 1854, in Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (8 vols. plus Index, New Brunswick, N. J., 1953-1955), 2:293; Davis to Lincoln, December 15, 1854, and Washburne to Lincoln, December 19, 1854, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, Library of Congress.

²⁰ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, January 13, 1855.

²¹ *Ibid.*, February 17, 24, 1855.

²² *Ibid.*, September 15, 1855.

²³ Thomas J. McCormack, ed., *Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896* (2 vols., Cedar Rapids, 1909), 2:3; John M. Palmer, *Personal Recollections of John M. Palmer: The Story of an Earnest Life* (Cincinnati, 1901), 63.

²⁴ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 31, April 7, 1855.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, June 2, July 21, September 22, October 20, 1855.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, June 23, 1855, April 5, 26, May 3, 17, 1856; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, March 29, 1856.

²⁷ Palmer to Trumbull, January 11, February 28, 1856, and Bissell to Trumbull, January 19, 1856, in the Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; Trumbull to Palmer, January 24, 1856, in George Thomas Palmer, "Letters from Lyman Trumbull to John M. Palmer, 1854-1858," in *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 16:28-29 (April-July, 1923); *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 15, 1856.

²⁸ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, February 23, March 22, 1856; *Transactions of the McLean County Historical Society*, 3:36.

²⁹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 15, May 31, 1856; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 8, 1856. In the municipal election, the taint of Know-Nothingism handicapped the anti-Nebraska forces. Their candidate for mayor was Francis C. Sherman, whom the *Chicago Daily Times*, February 6, 21, 1856, labeled a tool of Wentworth.

³⁰ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 7, 1856; Albert J. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858* (2 vols., Boston, 1928), 2:566.

³¹ *The Age* (Augusta, Maine), August 7, 1856, photostat in the Chicago Historical Society; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 21, July 19, 1856.

³² Wentworth to Lincoln, August 8, October 21, 1856, in the Herndon-Weik Collection, Library of Congress; *Daily Democratic Press*, July 19, 1856; *Daily Illinois State Journal* (Springfield), September 26, 1856; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, August 23, 1856.

³³ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, November 15, 1856.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, September 13, December 6, 1856, January 17, 31, 1857.

³⁵ *Chicago Weekly Times*, February 19, 1857; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 23, 1857; W. A. Brown to Trumbull, February 28, 1857, in the Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁶ *Chicago Daily Journal*, March 2, 1857; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 2, 1857.

³⁷ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 14, 1857; Pierce, *Chicago*, 2:223.

CHAPTER IX

¹ *Daily Democratic Press* (Chicago), March 24, 1857.

² *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 11, 1857; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 14, 1857.

³ *Daily Democratic Press*, April 21, 1857; John J. Flinn, *History of the Chicago Police from the Settlement of the Community to the Present Time* (Chicago, 1887), 83. For an unfavorable account of the raid, see Frederick F. Cook, *Bygone Days in Chicago: Recollections of the "Garden City" of the Sixties* (Chicago, 1910), 156-159.

⁴ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 9, 11, 14, 16, 21, May 5, 1857; Pierce, *Chicago*, 2:317-318.

⁵ Andreas, *Chicago*, 1:193.

⁶ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, February 6, 1858.

⁷ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 8, 22, 1857, February 26, 1858; *Press and Tribune*, June 15, July 6, 1859; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, July 15, 1859. A tax of seventeen mills was levied during Wentworth's term.

⁸ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 14, 1857, February 6, 1858; *Daily Democratic Press*, April 29, 1857. Commercial billiard tables and bowling alleys were technically illegal, but their operators paid regular fines in lieu of licenses.

⁹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, February 6, 1858; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 24, 26, 1857; Flinn, *Chicago Police*, 83-84.

¹⁰ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 18, 21, 1857; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, July 25, 1857; Flinn, *Chicago Police*, 85, 88; Virgil W. Peterson, *Barbarians in Our Midst: A History of Chicago Crime and Politics* (Boston, 1952), 23-24. The lawyer was Charles S. Cameron.

¹¹ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 20, 25, 1857.

¹² *Ibid.*, October 20, 1857; *Chicago Daily Times*, March 7, 18, 1858; Francis A. Eastman, *Chicago City Manual, 1915* (Chicago, 1915), 13; James S. McQuade ed., *A Synoptical History of the Chicago Fire Department* (Chicago, 1908), 14-17. The volunteers were also angry at Wentworth's administration because they were denied funds for repainting their trucks. See *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 4, 1857.

¹³ *Boston Journal*, quoted in the *Central Transcript* (Clinton, Ill.), September 3, 1857.

¹⁴ *Chicago Daily Times*, February 18, 1858; Ellis Smalley to Douglas, January 20, 1858, in the Douglas Papers, University of Chicago. For examples of Wentworth's attempts to woo the Irish, see the *Chicago Daily Tribune* of May 25, 1857, and the *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, November 21, 1857.

¹⁵ *Chicago Daily Times*, February 3, February 27, 1858.

¹⁶ *Daily Democratic Press*, June 2, 10, 11, 1857; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 20, 1857.

¹⁷ *Daily Pantagraph* (Bloomington, Ill.), June 12, 1857.

¹⁸ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 23, 25, 1857.

¹⁹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, November 28, 1857.

²⁰ Lincoln to Henry C. Whitney, December 18, 1857, in Basler, ed., *Collected Works*, 2:429.

²¹ *Chicago Daily Times*, August 22, 23, 1857; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, September 12, October 31, November 7, 1857; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 10, 31, 1857. Wentworth's friend, Thomas Hoyne, was said to have introduced the briber to the witness. Brayman was sentenced to four years in prison.

²² *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, September 12, 1857; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 20, 1858. On March 12, 1857, the *Tribune* declared that its circulation was more than twice that of the *Democrat*.

²³ Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln* (2 vols., New York, 1950), 1:148-175, 229-270.

²⁴ "Alliance" may be too strong a word, but the evidence is strong that Republicans and Buchanan Democrats consulted with one another about ways and means of defeating Douglas. James G. Randall, *Lincoln the Liberal Statesman* (New York, 1947), 211.

²⁵ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, December 5, 12, 26, 1857.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, December 12, 1857.

²⁷ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 8, 1857; *Chicago Daily Times*, March 11, 13, 27, 1858.

²⁸ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, March 11, 1858.

²⁹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, February 20, 1858.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, December 19, February 20, 1858.

³¹ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, March 9, 1858.

³² *Chicago Daily Times*, February 14, 1858; *Daily Illinois State Register* (Springfield), February 17, 1858. The fact that Joseph Forrest was nominated for clerk of the Recorder's Court seemed to indicate that Wentworth had controlled the Republican convention, but Long John opposed the choice of his sub-editor, supporting the ballad singer Frank Lumbard instead. Having lost two editors recently, he was reluctant to part with a third. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 15, 1858.

³³ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 9, 22, 25, 1858; *Daily Democratic Press*, February 25, March 1, 1858; *Chicago Daily Times*, February 28, 1858; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 6, 1858.

³⁴ *Chicago Daily Times*, March 18, 1858; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 20, 23, 1858.

³⁵ *Chicago Daily Times*, March 27, 1858; *Wentworth Genealogy*, 2:714-715.

³⁶ Wentworth to Lincoln, April 19, 1858, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection, Library of Congress.

³⁷ Lincoln to Washburne, April 26, 1858, in Basler, ed., *Collected Works*, 2:443-444; Washburne to Lincoln, May 2, 1858, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

³⁸ Washburne to Lincoln, May 6, 1858, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection; William Cary to Washburne, May 16, 1858, in the Washburne Papers, Library of Congress; Lincoln to Washburne, May 10, 1858, in Basler, ed., *Collected Works*, 2:445-446. Washburne's controversial letter was written on April 12. It is quoted in full in a letter from Wilson to the editor of the *Polo Advertiser*, March 16, 1860. Copies are in the Washburne Papers.

³⁹ Ray to Washburne, May 2 [1858], and Wilson to Washburne, May 3, 1858, in the Washburne Papers.

⁴⁰ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 1, 15, 22, 1858.

⁴¹ E. T. Bridges to Lincoln, May 18, 1858, and Charles Wilson to Lincoln, May 31, 1858, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection; Lincoln to Wilson, June 1, 1858, in Basler, ed., *Collected Works*, 2:456–457.

⁴² *Chicago Daily Times*, May 19, June 2, 8, 22, 1858; *Daily Illinois State Register*, June 4, 1858.

⁴³ *Daily Democratic Press*, May 20, 1858; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 25, 1858; *Chicago Daily Journal*, May 27, 1858; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, May 31, 1858. As late as March 20, however, Charles H. Ray of the *Tribune* was warning Ozias M. Hatch that Wentworth had “his eyes fixed on the Senate.” Ray added that “it would be more harmonious if John was in hell where he belongs.” Hatch Papers, Illinois State Historical Library.

⁴⁴ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 21, 1858.

⁴⁵ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, May 31, 1858.

⁴⁶ *Chicago Daily Journal*, May 31, 1858.

⁴⁷ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 14, 1858.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, June 17, 1858.

⁴⁹ Lincoln to Trumbull, June 23, 1858, in Basler, ed., *Collected Works*, 2:472.

⁵⁰ Beveridge, *Lincoln*, 2:564–572, is most responsible for the Wentworth-conspiracy explanation of Lincoln’s nomination. Milton, in his *Eve of Conflict*, 304–305, and Nevins, in *Emergence of Lincoln*, 1:357–358, follow Beveridge’s interpretation. For a fuller criticism of the latter, see Don E. Fehrenbacher, “The Nomination of Lincoln in 1858,” in *The Abraham Lincoln Quarterly*, 6:24–36 (March, 1950).

⁵¹ Wentworth to Lincoln, June 6, 1858, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

⁵² *Chicago Daily Times*, June 16–18, July 29, August 3, 12, 1858; *Chicago Daily Press and Tribune*, August 3, 7, 11, 1858; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, August 7, 1858. Brown was also under arrest for arson and was convicted on that charge.

⁵³ *Chicago Daily Times*, October 7, 1858; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, October 16, 1858.

⁵⁴ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, October 2, 16, 1858.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, October 2, 1858; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, October 29, November 1, 1858; *Chicago Daily Press and Tribune*, October 27, 28, November 1, 1858.

⁵⁶ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, December 4, 1858; Ebenezer Peck to Lyman Trumbull, November 22, 1858, and Norman B. Judd to Trumbull, December 26, 1858, in the Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

⁵⁷ Davis (quoting Wentworth) to Lincoln, January 1, 1859 (misdated 1858), in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

⁵⁸ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, November 20, 1858.

CHAPTER X

¹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 26, April 2, 1859.

² *Ibid.*, March 26, July 23, October 8, November 26, 1859.

³ *Chicago Press and Tribune*, March 19, 1859. For the attempt to

publish an *Evening Tribune*, which was frustrated because the *Journal*, by contract, held a monopoly of the afternoon telegraphic dispatches, see both newspapers for the first ten days of July, 1858.

⁴ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 26, 1859.

⁵ *Chicago Press and Tribune*, March 22, 1859.

⁶ *Ibid.*, March 17, 22, 23, April 7, 19, September 22, 1859.

⁷ *Chicago Daily Times*, April 5, 1859.

⁸ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, December 18, 1858.

⁹ *Corporate History of the Chicago and North Western Railway Company* (1923), 5, 7, 12; Robert J. Casey and W. A. S. Douglas, *Pioneer Railroad: The Story of the Chicago and North Western System* (New York, 1948), 66–67, 75, 308.

¹⁰ Wentworth was an investor in the Chicago Hydraulic Company, a private corporation whose monopoly was ended with the establishment of the Chicago City Hydraulic Company, with which McAlpine served as engineer. Pierce, *Chicago*, 2:332, summarizes the struggle between the two companies.

¹¹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 13, 1857, January 16, May 29, June 5, 1858; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, December 20, 1858.

¹² Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad Company, manuscripts held by the Chicago and North Western Railway Company, 2:183, 190, 199–200, 204–205, 208–209; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, June 3, 1858; *Chicago Press and Tribune*, October 7, 1858.

¹³ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, November 13, 20, December 18, 25, 1858, June 11, 1859; circular letter from Wentworth to Galena shareholders, May 24, 1859, in the Charles Hempstead Papers, Chicago Historical Society; Galena and Chicago Union Minutes, 2:236–239.

¹⁴ *Chicago Daily Times*, June 5, 1859; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 11, 1859; *Chicago Press and Tribune*, June 2, 7, 1859.

¹⁵ *Chicago Press and Tribune*, February 21, 1860; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 22, 1861; *Corporate History of the Chicago and North Western*, 6, 13; Galena and Chicago Union Minutes, 2:416–418.

¹⁶ *Chicago Daily Times*, June 5, 1859; Galena and Chicago Union Minutes, 2:250–251.

¹⁷ *Chicago Press and Tribune*, June 14, 22, 30, July 1, 2, 1859. Late in June, Wentworth was instrumental in getting an injunction preventing the Haines administration from converting \$100,000 of short-term bonds to long-term ones, invoking a debt limitation in the charter. See the *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, July 9, 1859.

¹⁸ *Chicago Press and Tribune*, July 13, August 9, September 8, 22, 26, 1859; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, August 27, 1859; *Joliet Signal*, July 19, 1859. See the *Press and Tribune*, July 7, 8, and the *Weekly Democrat*, July 16, 1859, for descriptions of what the former called a “Big Drunk” at Jackson Hall, attended by former members of Long John’s mayoral administration. According to the *Press and Tribune*, the number included many Irishmen, and the purpose of the meeting was to lay plans for Wentworth’s emergence as the “Irish Democratic” candidate for mayor. According to the *Democrat*, there were 153 men present,

with *Tribune* reporters spying through the windows, and the viands consumed included:

16 lbs. Swiss cheese	\$ 4.00
1 jar mustard	.37
52 lbs. codfish	3.25
2 boxes crackers	2.65
4 half-barrels lager bier	16.00
2 boxes grape juice	27.00

¹⁹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, October 29, November 5, 26, December 3, 10, 1859.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, November 12, 26, 1859; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, November 22, 1859.

²¹ Herndon was later admonished by Lincoln to stop speaking of Judd in terms similar to those used by Wentworth. Lincoln to Judd, February 5, 1860, in Basler, ed., *Collected Works*, 3:516.

²² Judd to Lincoln, December 1, 1859, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection; Judd to Lyman Trumbull, December 1, 1859, in the Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

²³ Walter Wright to Trumbull, December 20, 1859, in the Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, December 5, 1859.

²⁴ N. Niles to Lincoln, December 16, 1859, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

²⁵ Wentworth to Lincoln, December 21, 1859, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

²⁶ Judd to Lincoln, December 11, 1859, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection; Lincoln to Messrs. Dole, Hubbard & Brown, December 14, 1859, in Basler, ed., *Collected Works*, 3:507–508. Lincoln's letter was published in the *Chicago Press and Tribune*, January 30, 1860.

²⁷ Wentworth to Lincoln, December 28 (misdated November 28), 1859, and January 13, February 11, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection. The disclaimer is quoted in David Davis to Lincoln, February 21, 1860, in the same collection. Lincoln's letters to Wentworth are not extant.

²⁸ Wentworth to Lincoln, February 19, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

²⁹ Wentworth to Lincoln, February 11, 19, 1860, and Davis to Lincoln, February 21, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

³⁰ *Chicago Press and Tribune*, February 15, 1860; *Daily Illinois State Register* (Springfield), February 17, 1860.

³¹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, February 11, 18, 1860; *Chicago Press and Tribune*, February 9, 1860.

³² *Chicago Press and Tribune*, February 18, 20, 1860; Wentworth to Lincoln, February 19, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection. Judd maintained that Wentworth carried the primary meetings because they were "oversloughed and controlled by irish democrats." Judd to Lincoln, February 21, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection. See also the *Chicago Press and Tribune*, February 17, 1860.

³³ David Davis to Lincoln, February 25, 1860, in the Robert Todd

Lincoln Collection; Peck to Lyman Trumbull, March 20, 1860, in the Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁴ Judd to Lincoln, February 21, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

³⁵ Wentworth to Lincoln, February 22, 1860, and Davis to Lincoln, February 25, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

³⁶ *Chicago Press and Tribune*, March 2, 1860.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, March 2, 3, 5, 1860; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, March 2, 1860; Frederic Bancroft, ed., *Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz* (6 vols., New York, 1913), 1:109-110.

³⁸ According to Joseph Forrest, the suit was eventually withdrawn, with Judd assuming the court costs.

³⁹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 10, 17, 1860. The election totals were as follows: John Wentworth, 9,998; Walter S. Gurnee, 8,739.

CHAPTER XI

¹ Wentworth to Lincoln, April 21, 1860, and Davis to Lincoln, May 5, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection, Library of Congress.

² *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 5, 1860; Wentworth to Yates, March 29, April 12, 1860, in the Richard Yates Papers, Illinois State Historical Library.

³ Wentworth to Lincoln, April 21, 30 (misdated May 30), 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection; Henry Clay Whitney, *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1940), 152-153. Lincoln was much amused by this advice and built it into a "good yarn," which he told at Seward's home on October 17, 1861. Tyler Dennett, ed., *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay* (New York, 1939), 28-29.

⁴ Davis to Lincoln, April 23, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

⁵ Same to same, May 5, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

⁶ Judd to Lincoln, May 2, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

⁷ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 5, 1860; H. Kreismann to Washburne, May 1, 1860, in the Washburne Papers, and Judd to Trumbull, April 2, 1860, in the Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸ *Chicago Press and Tribune*, May 9, 1860; *Daily Illinois State Register* (Springfield), May 11, 1860; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 19, 1860.

⁹ H. Kreismann to Washburne, May 13, 1860, in the Washburne Papers; William Jayne to Trumbull, May 13, 1860, and Horace White to Trumbull, May 14, 1860, in the Trumbull Papers; Judd to Lincoln, May 25, 1860, and David Davis to Lincoln, June 7, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection, all in the Library of Congress. Gustave Koerner, in his *Memoirs*, 2:83, wrote: "I learned afterwards that it was left to Mr. Lincoln to name the delegates-at-large for that State." The four men chosen were Judd, Davis, Koerner, and Browning.

¹⁰ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, November 12, 1859, January 7, Feb-

ruary 4, 11, March 17, 1860; H. Kreismann to Washburne, May 13, 1860, in the Washburne Papers.

¹¹ H. Kreismann to Washburne, May 15, 1860, in the Washburne Papers; Delahay to Lincoln, May 15, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 19, 1860; William E. Baringer, *Lincoln's Rise to Power* (Boston, 1937), 235.

¹² E. Hempstead to Washburne, May 14, 1860, in the Washburne Papers.

¹³ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 19, 1860; Judd to Lincoln, May 25, 1860, and Davis to Lincoln, June 7, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection. In a letter to Ozias M. Hatch, written on May 29, William L. Church asserted that Wentworth was still "blatting like an unweaned calf" in his disappointment at the nomination of Lincoln. Ozias M. Hatch Papers, Illinois State Historical Library.

¹⁴ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, June 2, July 2, 31, October 9, 30, 1860; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, October 27, November 3, 1860.

¹⁵ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, October 6, 7, 9, 1860; *Chicago Press and Tribune*, October 9, 10, 11, 13, 1860. The *Liberator* of October 19, 1860, praised "the bold, generous, and outspoken appeals of Hon. John Wentworth . . . who deserves the warmest thanks for his noble interposition."

¹⁶ *New York Herald*, August 1, 4, 14, 1860; *Illinois Daily State Journal* (Springfield), October 15, 1860.

¹⁷ *Greenville (Ill.) Advocate*, August 16, 1860.

¹⁸ Medill to Lincoln, August 9, 1860, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

¹⁹ *Chicago Press and Tribune*, October 13, 1860.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, September 14, 21, 22, 24, 26, 1860; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, September 22, 1860; *Chicago Daily Democrat*, September 20, 21, 26, 1860.

²¹ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, October 2, 1860; *Aurora Beacon*, quoted in the *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, October 27, 1860; *Waukegan Weekly Gazette*, quoted in the *Chicago Daily Democrat*, October 30, 1860.

²² *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, November 17, December 1, 1860.

²³ *Ibid.*, November 17, 1860.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, January 5, 12, 19, February 9, 1861. Wentworth proclaimed January 8 (the anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans) a holiday in Chicago to honor Andrew Jackson, Major Robert Anderson, and the Union.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, February 16, April 6, 20, 1861.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, April 20, 1861.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, April 20, 27, May 11, 1861.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, April 27, 1861.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, April 27, May 4, 1861.

³⁰ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, September 24, 1860; John Wentworth, *Early Chicago* (Fergus' Historical Series, Chicago, 1876), 29. In August, Wentworth and his wife attended a "Prince of Wales Ball" at Montreal, where he arranged the Prince's visit to Chicago. *Prairie Farmer* (Chicago), August 23, 1860. The manuscript census rolls in the National Archives show Marie and Roxanna as residents of Chicago in 1860.

³¹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, February 16, March 2, 1861; Flinn, *Chicago Police*, 88-89, 92-93.

³² Flinn, *Chicago Police*, 95; *Chicago Daily Tribune* (the new name of the *Press and Tribune* after October 24, 1860), March 27, 28, 1861; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, March 30, 1861.

³³ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, February 23, March 23, 30, 1861; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 29, March 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, April 9, 1861; *Chicago Post*, February 20, March 19, 21, 22, 1861. Wentworth's objections were based upon a provision in the Illinois Constitution which stated that legislation should not become effective until at least sixty days after the adjournment of the legislature. The municipal election scheduled for the third Tuesday in April fell within this sixty-day period.

³⁴ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 11, 1861; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, April 13, 1861.

³⁵ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 9, 15, 1861; *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, April 20, 1861.

³⁶ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, January 5, April 6, 1861.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, March 9, 1861; *Chicago Post*, March 30, 1861.

³⁸ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, April 29, May 13, 1861; Rufus Blanchard, *Discovery and Conquest of the Northwest with the History of Chicago* (2 vols., Chicago, 1898-1900), 2:235-236. Augustus Boyden, the county treasurer, had also instituted a libel suit against Wentworth at about the same time. See the *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, June 22, July 13, 20, 1861.

³⁹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, July 27, 1861. Wentworth himself always insisted that Bradley's death was the main reason for his sale of the *Democrat*. See his letter to Zebina Eastman, November 15, 1873, in the Wentworth Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

CHAPTER XII

¹ *Chicago Tribune*, October 17, 1888.

² Joseph B. McCullagh, in *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 26, 1893, in the Walter B. Stevens Scrapbook No. 6, p. 42, Missouri Historical Society.

³ *Chicago Daily Democrat*, July 2, 1860.

⁴ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, April 20, 1861.

⁵ *Ibid.*, April 20, May 4, 8, 25, 1861; Pierce, *Chicago*, 2:128-129.

⁶ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, May 18, June 15, 22, July 13, 1861. Scammon's suit was eventually withdrawn.

⁷ *Chicago Post*, February 20, 1861.

⁸ The others were John H. Muhlke and Wentworth's friend Elliott Anthony (Republicans), and future Chief Justice Melville W. Fuller (Democrat).

⁹ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 8, 1862.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, February 11, 13, 14, 17, 1862; O. M. Dickerson, *The Illinois Constitutional Convention of 1862* (*University of Illinois Studies*, vol. 1, no. 9, Urbana, 1905), 10-15, 43, 46, 48-49; Illinois Constitutional Convention of 1862; and Various Historical Matters Concerning John Wentworth, anonymous manuscript in the Chicago Historical Society.

¹¹ *Ibid.*; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 10, February 6, April 14, 1862; *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Illinois, Convened at Springfield, January 7, 1862* (Springfield, 1862), 9–10, 59, 189–190, and *passim*.

¹² *Convention Journal*, 937–938; Dickerson, *Constitutional Convention of 1862*, 15–17, 26–27.

¹³ Dickerson, *Constitutional Convention of 1862*, 15; *Convention Journal*, 75, 614, 923–924; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 25, 1862.

¹⁴ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 18, 1862; Pierce, *Chicago*, 2:266.

¹⁵ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 15, 16, 19, 1862.

¹⁶ Dickerson, *Constitutional Convention of 1862*, 23–24; *Illinois Daily State Journal* (Springfield), June 23, 1862.

¹⁷ Pierce, *Chicago*, 2:265; Medill to Yates, June 19, 1862, in the Yates Papers, photostats in the Illinois State Historical Library, of originals in the possession of Mrs. John L. Pickering, Springfield.

¹⁸ See, for example, his equivocal remarks in the constitutional convention, as reported in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 21, 1862. Also, his long letter to William Herndon, February 4, 1866, in the Herndon–Weik Collection, Library of Congress.

¹⁹ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 5, 10, 12, 1863.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, April 16, 20, 26, 1863.

²¹ *Ibid.*, June 11, 14, 1864; *Chicago Times*, June 14, 1864.

²² Lincoln to Scripps, July 4, 20, 1864, Arnold to Lincoln, July 2, 18, 1864, and Scripps to Lincoln, July 15, 1864, in Basler, ed., *Collected Works*, 7:423–424, 453.

²³ *Chicago Tribune*, August 27, 28, 1864. Some needed punctuation has been added for the sake of clarity. A slightly variant version is in Andreas, *History of Chicago*, 3:843–844.

²⁴ *Chicago Tribune*, September 2, 3, 1864.

²⁵ William T. Hutchinson, *Cyrus Hall McCormick: Harvest, 1856–1884* (New York, 1935), 59–60.

²⁶ Pierce, *Chicago*, 2:280–281; Andreas, *Chicago*, 3:844.

²⁷ *Congressional Globe*, 39 Congress, 1 session, 3–4, 65.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 688, 1199, 1367, 1861, 3149, 3399, 3850.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3604; Clarence Lee Miller, *The States of the Old Northwest and the Tariff, 1865–1888* (Emporia, Kansas, 1929), 17–20.

³⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 39 Congress, 1 session, 3602–3603, 3642, 3645, 3725.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3711–3714; Miller, *Old Northwest and the Tariff*, 37; Herbert Ronald Ferleger, *David A. Wells and the American Revenue System, 1865–1870* (New York, 1942), 97. At the time of his appointment Wells was already serving as chairman of a three-man revenue commission.

³² *Congressional Globe*, 39 Congress, 1 session, 1431–1435, 1461, 1612–1613; Davis Rich Dewey, *Financial History of the United States* (11th ed., New York, 1931), 334, 340; Burke A. Hinsdale, ed., *The Works of James Abram Garfield* (2 vols., Boston, 1883), 2:615.

³³ *Congressional Globe*, 39 Congress, 1 session, 1260, 2155, 3403.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2184–2187, 2243–2246, 4181–4183.

³⁵ *Chicago Tribune*, August 31, 1866.

³⁶ Leonard Swett to Davis, August 8, 1866, in Harry E. Pratt's transcripts of Davis Papers, Illinois State Historical Library.

³⁷ Judd to Trumbull, May 7, June 12, 1865, in the Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁸ Trumbull to William Jayne, August 19, 1866, in the Lyman Trumbull Collection, Illinois State Historical Library.

³⁹ *Chicago Tribune*, October 3, 10, 11, 1866; *Chicago Republican*, October 9, 10, 11, 1866.

⁴⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 39 Congress, 2 session, 10–11, 138–140, 320, 808.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 140; *House Journal*, 39 Congress, 2 session, 311–312, 376.

⁴² *Congressional Globe*, 39 Congress, 2 session, 1429, 1658–1659, and Appendix, 138–144; Ferleger, *David A. Wells*, 165–173; Miller, *Old Northwest and the Tariff*, 37–38.

CHAPTER XIII

¹ Wentworth Scrapbook, 128, in the Chicago Historical Society.

² Will of R. Marie L. Wentworth, in the Surrogate Records of Rensselaer County, Troy, New York; Moses J. Wentworth, manuscript sketch by his wife in the Chicago Historical Society. Moses was the son of Joseph Wentworth, Long John's oldest brother.

³ Wentworth Scrapbook, 104.

⁴ John Drury, *Old Chicago Houses* (Chicago, 1941), 19–22.

⁵ Inventory of Wentworth's estate, in the Probate Records of Cook County; United States Census of 1860, Agricultural Productions, manuscripts in the Illinois State Archives.

⁶ Inventory of Wentworth's estate; Andreas, *Chicago*, 3:146; Real Estate Map of Cook County, J. W. Snyder, 1886, in the Chicago Historical Society.

⁷ United States Census of 1880, Agricultural Productions, manuscript in the Illinois State Archives. The sum of \$460,000 was probably an underestimation. Judging by the prices Wentworth had paid for some of the land in the 1870's, the farm was worth closer to \$750,000 by 1880.

⁸ Wentworth Scrapbook, 104–106; *Prairie Farmer* (Chicago), quoted in the *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, July 20, 1861.

⁹ Paul Wallace Gates names Wentworth and James N. Brown of Sangamon County as the two leading stock breeders of Illinois during the Civil War era. Gates, "Large-Scale Farming in Illinois, 1850–1870," in *Agricultural History*, 6:22–23 (January, 1932), and "Cattle Kings in the Prairies," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 35:397–398 (December, 1948).

¹⁰ *Prairie Farmer*, quoted in the *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, July 20, 1861. Col. Lewis G. Morris, of New York, was Wentworth's principal source of blooded livestock.

¹¹ *Weekly Chicago Democrat*, February 26, July 2, 1859.

¹² *Ibid.*, February 26, 1859; Charles S. Plumb, *Types and Breeds of Farm Animals* (Boston, 1906), 530–531.

¹³ *Prairie Farmer*, October 30, 1875, p. 348; February 24, March 17, 1877, pp. 60, 85.

¹⁴ *Chicago Press and Tribune*, September 12, 23, 1859; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 1, 1874; *Transactions of the Illinois State Agricultural Society*, 6 (1865–1866): vii, 1–16, 26–27, 32, 35–36. At the state fair held in Chicago early in September, 1865, Wentworth's animals won six first and eight second premiums, totaling \$169.

¹⁵ *Prairie Farmer*, May, 1843, pp. 113–115, August 21, 28, 1875, pp. 269, 277; *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 2 session, 8; *The Times* (Chicago), January 31, 1885; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 14, 1885.

¹⁶ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 7, 1885.

¹⁷ G. P. Brown, *Drainage Channel and Waterway* (Chicago, 1894), 320–322; John Moses and Joseph Kirkland, *History of Chicago, Illinois* (2 vols., Chicago, 1895), 2:552–554. The city itself had actually begun the dredging of a channel through Mud Lake in the 1850's. See the *Chicago Press and Tribune*, August 28, 1860.

¹⁸ Moses and Kirkland, *Chicago*, 2:554; Andreas, *Chicago*, 3:135–136; Brown, *Drainage Channel*, 324–326.

¹⁹ Brown, *Drainage Channel*, 342; *Annual Report of the Citizens' Association of Chicago*, 1884 (Chicago, 1884), 9.

²⁰ Letter from Wentworth in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 21, 1874.

²¹ *Ibid.*; *Chicago Evening Journal*, August 25, 1885; Andreas, *Chicago*, 3:136.

²² Andreas, *Chicago*, 3:334.

²³ Everett Chamberlin, *Chicago and Its Suburbs* (Chicago, 1874), 218; Map of Chicago, by J. Van Vechten (1868), and Pelzer's Atlas of Chicago, 1872, vol. 2, no. 2, both in the Chicago Historical Society.

²⁴ *Chicago Herald*, October 19, 1888; receipts for sales of lots in 1867, in the Wentworth Papers, Chicago Historical Society; Inventory of Wentworth's estate.

²⁵ Schedules of United States Census for 1860, manuscript in the National Archives.

²⁶ Galena and Chicago Union Minutes, 2:568–570; Casey and Douglas, *Pioneer Railroad*, 121–123.

²⁷ Moses and Kirkland, *Chicago*, 2:684; Elliott Anthony, *A Treatise on the Law of Consolidation of Railroad Companies* (Chicago, 1865); *New York Daily Tribune*, September 26, 30, 1876.

²⁸ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 1, 1862; *Chicago Times*, November 7, 1864.

²⁹ Quimby to Smith, July 26, 1867, in the Dartmouth Archives. See also Samuel Lee to Smith, October 8, 24, December 26, 1864, and Wentworth to Smith, January 28, 1865, in the Dartmouth Archives.

³⁰ Bartlett to Walter Gibson, secretary of the New York alumni (n.d.), in the Dartmouth Archives.

³¹ Lord, *History of Dartmouth*, 368; Wentworth folder in the Dartmouth Archives. In 1856 the Dartmouth chapter of Phi Beta Kappa had elected Wentworth to membership.

³² *Chicago Times*, September 23, 1876.

³³ *Chicago Republican*, September 27, 1869; *Chicago Evening Post*, October 14, 25, 27, November 21, 1869; Pierce, *Chicago*, 2:297.

³⁴ Pierce, *Chicago*, 2:299; *Chicago Tribune*, October 20, 21, 23, 30, 1870. Radical labor groups also supported Wentworth.

³⁵ *Chicago Tribune*, October 31, 1870; *Chicago Times*, October 30, 31, November 2, 1870.

³⁶ Andreas, *Chicago*, 3:846.

³⁷ Wentworth to W. Waller (n.d.), in the Wentworth Papers, Chicago Historical Society.

³⁸ Wentworth to Davis, April 15, 18, 1872, in the David Davis Papers (photostats owned by Mr. Willard R. King of Chicago of originals in the possession of the Davis family).

³⁹ Two letters in the Davis Papers (King photostats), with no dates, but written from Cincinnati shortly before the opening of the convention.

⁴⁰ *Chicago Tribune*, May 1, 1872; *Cincinnati Commercial*, April 30, May 1, 2, 1872; George W. Julian, *Political Recollections, 1840 to 1872* (Chicago, 1884), 338-339; McCormack, ed., *Memoirs of Gustave Koerner*, 2:544.

⁴¹ Henry Watterson, "Marse Henry," *An Autobiography* (2 vols., New York, 1919), 2:245-247; Horace White, *The Life of Lyman Trumbull* (Boston, 1913), 380-381.

⁴² Telegram from Wentworth to Frank D. Orme, care of Davis, May 2, 1872, in Harry E. Pratt's transcripts of Davis Papers, Illinois State Historical Library.

⁴³ McCormack, ed., *Memoirs of Gustave Koerner*, 2:555; *Cincinnati Commercial*, May 4, 1872; *The Nation*, May 9, 1872, p. 304.

⁴⁴ Earle Dudley Ross, *The Liberal Republican Movement* (New York, 1919), 98-100; *Cincinnati Commercial*, May 4, 1872.

⁴⁵ James G. Randall, ed., *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning* (2 vols., Springfield, Illinois, 1933), 2:354.

⁴⁶ Wentworth to David Davis, November 7, 1874, in the Davis Papers (King photostats); *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 14, 1876; *Chicago Mail*, October 16, 1888.

⁴⁷ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 3, 1874, April 12, 1876; History of Chicago Scrapbook, vol. 1, in the Chicago Historical Society.

⁴⁸ *New York Daily Tribune*, September 26, 30, 1876; Wentworth Scrapbook, 123-124, Chicago Historical Society.

⁴⁹ "Sketches of Club Life and History," in the Frank J. Aldrich Scrapbooks, B, 145, Chicago Historical Society.

⁵⁰ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 10, 11, 12, 13, 1880; *Proceedings of the Republican National Convention . . . 1880* (Chicago, 1881), 428-430.

⁵¹ *Proceedings of the Republican National Convention . . . 1880*, pp. 430-436; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 20, 21, 22, 1880. Wentworth was one of the thirty-six "Palmer House" delegates seated at Springfield.

⁵² *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 5, 6, 1880; *Proceedings of the Republican National Convention . . . 1880*, pp. 423, 467-494. After Garfield's death in 1881, there were rumors in Chicago that Wentworth would be invited to join Arthur's cabinet, but the reports proved to be false. See the *Inter Ocean* (Chicago), October 12, 1881.

CHAPTER XIV

¹ *Chicago Daily News*, July 4, 1887; *Chicago Herald*, July 17, 1887.

² *Chicago Herald*, July 17, 1887.

³ *Chicago Times*, August 5, 1888.

⁴ Wentworth Scrapbook, 13, Chicago Historical Society.

⁵ *Ibid.*; *Inter Ocean* (Chicago), June 18, 1879.

⁶ Wentworth to A. S. Hubbard, September 14, 1882, in the Wentworth Papers, Chicago Historical Society. One of the printed notices is in the same collection.

⁷ Wentworth Scrapbook, 136; *Wentworth Genealogy*, 1:v. Articles by Wentworth may be found in the following volumes of the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*: 9, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 36, 38, and 42.

⁸ Wentworth to Jacob Chapman, December 10, 1884, in the Wentworth Papers; Wentworth Scrapbook, 136.

⁹ Wentworth to J. S. C. Fogg, September 23, 1884, in the Dartmouth Archives; letter of Moses J. Wentworth, March 11, 1902, quoted in Edwin O. Gale, *Reminiscences of Early Chicago and Vicinity* (Chicago, 1902), 344. After Jackson Hall had been rebuilt, Wentworth sent a form letter to hundreds of persons, asking for copies of the *Democrat*. One of these letters is in the Wentworth Papers in the Chicago Historical Society.

¹⁰ Wentworth to Albert D. Hager, August 18, 1879, in the Chicago Historical Society Autograph Letters, 24:329. The indexes are now also in the Chicago Historical Society.

¹¹ Same to same, October 13, 1879, and January 9, 1881, in the Chicago Historical Society Autograph Letters, 24:409 and 27:13; Andreas, *Chicago*, 3:394.

¹² There is much material on the Wentworth–Scammon feud in the Chicago Historical Society Autograph Letters. See particularly Wentworth's committee report and resolution, 33:143; 34:255; and Scammon to Arnold, December 12, 1882, vol. 33, p. 145. As a member of the Board of Education during the 1860's, Wentworth had also accused Scammon of defrauding the school fund.

¹³ Wentworth to David Davis, November 7, 1874, in the Davis Papers (King photostats); Wentworth to T. Hebard Hannaford, August 1, 1884, in the Illinois State Historical Library.

¹⁴ *The Dartmouth*, November 19, 1886; *Chicago Times*, August 5, 1888.

¹⁵ *Chicago Tribune*, June 22, 1888.

¹⁶ Wentworth Scrapbook, 39, 45, 51, 79, 81; *Chicago Herald*, July 17, 1887, October 16, 1888.

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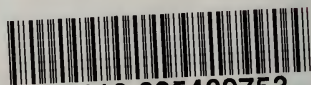
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